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Independent Politics: The Green Party Strategy Debate

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Independent Politics: The Green Party Strategy Debate

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by **admin**

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Independent Politics: The Green Party Strategy Debate

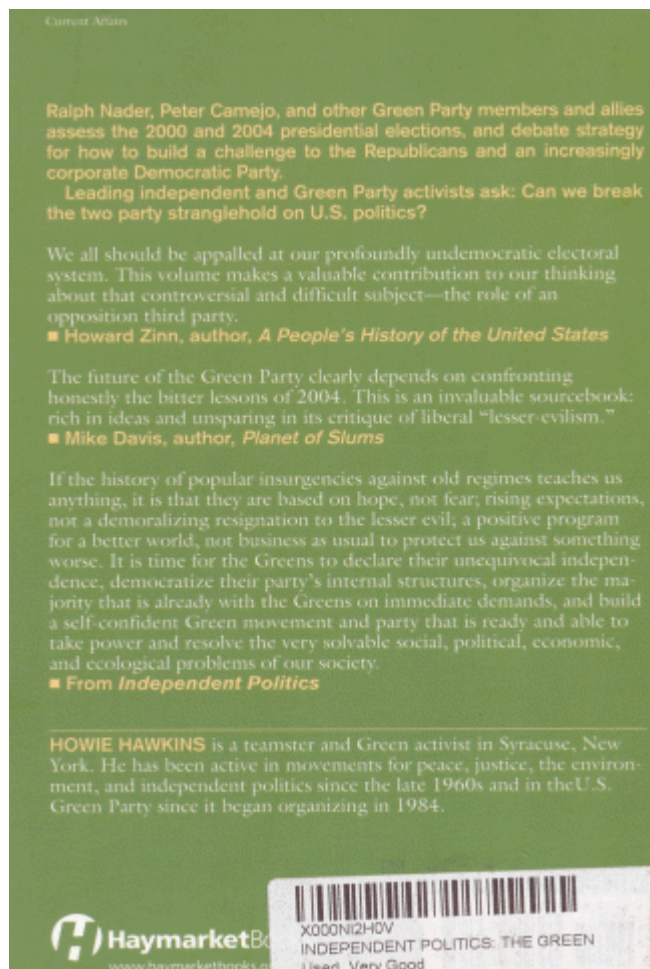
Edited by Howie Hawkins

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Dedicated to the memory of Walt Contreras Sheasby

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The Key to U.S. Elections

There was one peculiar event around the elections that received almost no analysis or discussion. The overwhelming majority of the supporters of John Kerry disagreed with their candidate on most major issues. Even in countries with completely distorted electoral systems, where money dominates and manipulates, it is quite unusual to see people voting massively for someone they consciously disagree with.

This simple fact tells how deep the corruption of the American political system has become. The Boston Globe reported 95 percent of the delegates at the Democratic Party convention opposed Kerry on the war. But these delegates are hopelessly corrupt people. They are part of a system based on careerism and money. They accept the game and call it being realistic. That is to lie to the people, to lie to themselves; to act out a lie does not bother these people at all.

Dennis Kucinich, Howard Dean, and Al Sharpton -- along with all the Democratic "left" -- bought in to the fundamental lie of the presidential campaign. That lie is simple. They tell the people that the Democratic Party is not corrupt, is not an agent of corporate rule, and is not a defender of George Bush and his policies. They do not tell the people the elections are fixed from day one through the control of money and the media. Nor do they speak of the role of the so-called "two-party" system that prevents the real issues from being heard or debated, and that does not allow representative democracy (proportional representation), or even runoffs that would make it possible for people to vote for an opposition candidate. That lie is the essence of our electoral system. And in one sense it is the key issue of the elections.

This fact is a statement on the enormous success of the two-party, pro-money political system developed in the United States. It has

achieved getting about half the people simply not to vote, and those who do vote even when they disagree with corporate domination vote in favor of what they oppose. Yet the people believe they somehow have chosen the government. Keeping this system in place is essential for the rule of a tiny minority over the majority in a complex modern economy. Open totalitarianism would have a very deep negative impact on the economy. Far better is the illusion of democracy. Crucial in this equation is the role "progressives," especially many of the liberal intellectuals, play.

-- Lessons from the 2004 Elections, By Peter Miguel Camejo January 2005 from "Independent Politics: The Green Party Strategy Debate, edited by Howie Hawkins

Re: Independent Politics: The Green Party Strategy Debate

by **admin**

Posted: **Sun Aug 09, 2015 9:42 pm**

Ten Key Values of the Green Party

There is no definitive list of the ten key values. They were first adopted as a discussion paper in 1984 and have been modified several times. Many state and local parties have adopted their own versions. Perhaps the most widely used version is the one ratified at the Green Party Convention in Denver, Colorado, June 2000, which is reprinted below.

1. GRASSROOTS DEMOCRACY

Every human being deserves a say in the decisions that affect their lives and not be subject to the will of another. Therefore, we will work to increase public participation at every level of government and to ensure that our public representatives are fully accountable to the people who elect them. We will also work to create new types of political organizations that expand the process of participatory democracy by directly including citizens in the decision-making process.

2. SOCIAL JUSTICE AND EQUAL OPPORTUNITY

All persons should have the rights and opportunity to benefit equally from the resources afforded us by society and the environment. We must consciously confront in ourselves, our organizations, and society at large, barriers such as racism and class oppression, sexism and homophobia, ageism and disability, which act to deny fair treatment and equal justice under the law.

3. ECOLOGICAL WISDOM

Human societies must operate with the understanding that we are part of nature, not separate from nature. We must maintain an ecological balance and live within the ecological and resource limits of our communities and our planet. We support a sustainable society that utilizes resources in such a way that future generations will benefit and not suffer from the practices of our generation. To this end we must

practice agriculture that replenishes the soil, move to an energy efficient economy, and live in ways that respect the integrity of natural systems.

4. NONVIOLENCE

It is essential that we develop effective alternatives to society's current patterns of violence. We will work to demilitarize and eliminate weapons of mass destruction, without being naive about the intentions of other governments. We recognize the need for self-defense and the defense of others who are in helpless situations. We promote non-violent methods to oppose practices and policies with which we disagree, and will guide our actions toward lasting personal, community, and global peace.

5. DECENTRALIZATION

Centralization of wealth and power contributes to social and economic injustice, environmental destruction, and militarization. Therefore, we support a restructuring of social, political, and economic institutions away from a system that is controlled by and mostly benefits the powerful few, to a democratic, less bureaucratic system. Decision-making should, as much as possible, remain at the individual and local level, while assuring that civil rights are protected for all citizens.

6. COMMUNITY-BASED ECONOMICS AND ECONOMIC JUSTICE

We recognize it is essential to create a vibrant and sustainable economic system, one that can create jobs and provide a decent standard of living for all people while maintaining a healthy ecological balance. A successful economic system will offer meaningful work with dignity, while paying a "living wage" which reflects the real value of a person's work.

Local communities must look to economic development that assures protection of the environment and workers' rights; broad citizen participation in planning; and enhancement of our "quality of life." We support independently owned and operated companies which are socially responsible, as well as co-operatives and public enterprises that distribute resources and control to more people through democratic participation.

7. FEMINISM AND GENDER EQUITY

We have inherited a social system based on male domination of politics and economics. We call for the replacement of the cultural ethics of domination and control with more cooperative ways of interacting that respect differences of opinion and gender. Human values such as equity between the sexes, interpersonal responsibility, and honesty must be developed with moral conscience. We should remember that the process that determines our decisions and actions is just as important as achieving the outcome we want.

8. RESPECT FOR DIVERSITY

We believe it is important to value cultural, ethnic, racial, sexual, religious, and

spiritual diversity, and to promote the development of respectful relationships across these lines.

We believe that the many diverse elements of society should be reflected in our organizations and decision-making bodies, and we support the leadership of people who have been traditionally closed out of leadership roles. We acknowledge and encourage respect for other life forms than our own and the preservation of biodiversity.

9. PERSONAL AND GLOBAL RESPONSIBILITY

We encourage individuals to act to improve their personal well-being and, at the same time, to enhance ecological balance and social harmony. We seek to join with people and organizations around the world to foster peace, economic justice, and the health of the planet.

10. FUTURE FOCUS AND SUSTAINABILITY

Our actions and policies should be motivated by long-term goals. We seek to protect valuable natural resources, safely disposing of or "unmaking" all waste we create, while developing a sustainable economics that does not depend on continual expansion for survival. We must counterbalance the drive for short-term profits by assuring that economic development, new technologies, and fiscal policies are responsible to future generations who will inherit the results of our actions.

Re: Independent Politics: The Green Party Strategy Debate

by **admin**

Posted: **Sun Aug 09, 2015 10:32 pm**

PART 1 OF 2

INTRODUCTION

The Green Party's Missed Opportunity in 2004--and the Opportunity Still at Hand

Howie Hawkins

Cowardice asks the question: is it safe? Expediency asks the question: is it politic? Vanity asks the question: is it popular? But Conscience asks the question: is it right? And there comes a time when one must take a position that is neither safe, nor politic, nor popular -- but he must take it simply because Conscience tells him it is right.

-- Martin Luther King Jr. [1]

Since the very inception of the Green Party movement in the United States in 1984, questions of political independence and organizational democracy have been at the

center of often divisive debates. Without resolving those debates, the Greens were able to muddle through and grow around a loose unity in action despite being divided at times into rival national organizations. But in 2004, these unresolved differences rendered the Greens divided in action and, as a result, marginalized in a presidential campaign that was dominated by the militaristic bipartisan consensus of the two big corporate parties.

This book brings together the principal documents and commentaries in the debate over Green Party strategy for the 2004 presidential election within the Green Party and in the broader progressive community. I hope it will help Greens understand and resolve these issues so they can move forward in the future as an independent political party with greater unity in purpose and action based on more democratic structures and processes.

I put it together because I believe the ability of the Green Party to transform our society depends on its political independence and on its adoption of a more democratic structure based on a one-Green, one-vote system of representation in the Green National Committee and conventions. I have tried to fairly present both sides of the debate by letting each side present its position in its own words. In the interest of full disclosure, I should add that I am a founding member of Greens for Democracy and Independence and supported Ralph Nader's presidential bid in 2004.

I am opposed to any split of the Green Party over these issues. At least until elections in the United States are held under a system of proportional representation, we need one united people's party standing in opposition to the corporate-sponsored two-party dictatorship. I want to see these issues worked out among the Greens over time by discussion and democratic decisions. It was in this vein that Peter Miguel Camejo introduced and Ralph Nader supported the "Green Party Unity" proposal to the Green National Convention. That proposal acknowledged the divided opinion among the Greens on presidential strategy for 2004, recommended a dual endorsement of Ralph Nader and David Cobb, and allowed each state Green Party to make its own decision on whether to put Nader or Cobb on its state ballot line in 2004. As Camejo stated in the proposal, "We will move forward to build the party together, accepting that we have differences and that these differences are normal in a democratic organization." [2] That is the spirit in which this collection is offered.

Corporate Rule through the Two-Party System

Since the Civil War, the moneyed class in the United States has organized its wealth into large corporations and controlled the government through its sponsorship of the two-party system. The corporate rulers finance two parties -- the Democrats and the Republicans -- to represent them. That way the corporate ruling class always has its people in power on both sides of the aisle in the legislatures and in the executive branch.

By financing two parties, the corporate powers give the illusion of democracy in a choice between two alternatives. But there is no alternative to the economic and foreign policies that are of primary concern to their wealthy sponsors. On economic and foreign policy matters, a pro-corporate "bipartisan consensus" prevails in both

corporate-sponsored parties.

The two corporate parties always have some differences on social issues, such as civil rights in the 1950s and 1960s, and the controversies over gun control, gay marriage, and school prayer of recent elections. These issues are certainly important and progressives can always use them to determine that one of the corporate-sponsored candidates is the lesser evil compared to the other. The problem is that with election contests between the two big parties focused on social issues, the bipartisan consensus on economic and foreign policy goes uncontested. Between elections, both corporate parties work together to execute the economic and foreign policies favored by their corporate sponsors.

Only an independent political insurgency can break us out of this box to challenge pro-corporate economic and foreign policies as well as reactionary social policies. But third parties face formidable obstacles. Ballot access barriers and disparity in campaign funds put every third-party campaign at a disadvantage from the start. The biggest barrier is the single-member-district, winner-take-all election system. That system strongly encourages people to vote strategically for the lesser evil between the two corporate parties instead of for the third party they really prefer. The result has been nearly 150 years of corporate rule through the two-party system, a far more sophisticated system of elite rule than the transparently tyrannical one-party systems many countries have had.

In 2000, the Green Party, with Ralph Nader heading the ticket, mounted the strongest challenge to this two-corporate-party system in three-quarters of a century, winning the largest vote for an independent progressive presidential ticket since the Debsian Socialists of 1904 to 1920 and Robert LaFollette's 1924 Progressive campaign. Since 2000 the Democrats had been constantly attacking Nader and the Greens for "spoiling" Gore's chance to beat Bush. As the 2004 presidential election approached, a question on the minds of everyone who follows politics was, "Would Nader and the Greens run again?"

The Missed Opportunity

As the Greens approached their June 24–27, 2004, convention in Milwaukee, a massive leadership vacuum cried out for an independent presidential crusade against the pro-war, pro-corporate bipartisan consensus of the Democrats and Republicans. The Green Party could have filled that vacuum by uniting behind the independent ticket of Ralph Nader and Peter Miguel Camejo.

Ralph Nader, the iconic progressive who had been prominent on the national stage for forty years, had a resume with accomplishments and qualifications that dwarfed those of Kerry and Bush. Nader had been instrumental in the passage of more significant legislation than Kerry and Bush combined, perhaps more progressive federal legislation than all the current members of Congress combined, including the National Traffic and Motor Vehicle Safety Act, the Wholesome Meat Act, the Freedom of Information Act, the Clean Water Act, the Clean Air Act, the Community Reinvestment Act, and the acts creating the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA), the Environmental Protection Agency, the Consumer Product Safety Commission, and the National

Cooperative Bank. To help advance the progressive reform agenda, Nader pioneered the concept of citizen action groups with lobbying and litigation capacities. He instigated scores of such groups to deal with consumer rights, energy and environmental issues, union democracy, investigative reporting, corporate crime, women's rights, racial discrimination, poverty, fair trade and corporate welfare, and to monitor the legislatures and government agencies. He had been arguably the most preferred candidate in the 2000 presidential election and might have won the election had it been conducted under a majority preference system instead of the electoral college plurality system. [3]

Camejo had just come off of two runs for California governor -- in 2002 and 2003 -- in which he received by far the most votes any Green gubernatorial candidate had received to date: nearly 400,000 votes, or 5.3 percent, in 2002, and nearly 250,000 votes, or 3 percent, in the 2003 recall election. Exit polls showed that his base of voters was disproportionately Black, Latino, and Asian-Pacific, as well as voters who had previously voted for Greens in lower proportions than other voters. People of color voted for Camejo at twice the rate white people did. Voters who earned less than \$15,000 a year voted for Camejo at three times the rate voters making over \$75,000 a year did. [4]

Nader and Camejo offered policies -- from ending the U.S. war in Iraq to creating a national health insurance program to spearheading public works projects to create millions of new jobs -- that had broad support among the people. Nader's 2000 campaign had demonstrated his capacity to raise funds and command media attention at the level needed to run a national presidential campaign with a significant impact on U.S. politics.

Since 2000, the Democrats had kept Nader in the national spotlight, keeping his media profile high with their constant whining about Nader's "spoiling" the 2000 election. Nader took most of the heat for the Green Party on this issue. His unbending defense of the Greens' right to run candidates should have earned him the Greens' lasting respect and laid the foundation for another united Nader/Green assault on the corporate-sponsored two-party system. But when delegates at the Green convention chose a "safe states" candidate over Nader, they implicitly affirmed the Democratic hacks' smear campaign against him. For the hacks, this was merely a convenient proxy for Greens or any other independent challenge to the Democrats from their left.

By the time Nader formally declared his candidacy on February 23, 2004, nearly every section of institutionalized progressivism had joined in the Democrats' vitriolic attacks against him. They said his campaign was driven by his ego, as if issues like ending the war and reversing the spread of economic insecurity were irrelevant. They said Nader was throwing away his progressive legacy by increasing Bush's chances for reelection. History may conclude in the end, however, that Nader's insistence on building an independent political alternative to the bipartisan consensus around militarism and corporate domination was a principled and logical extension of his career as a progressive reformer.

When Martin Luther King Jr. came out against the war in Vietnam in 1967, he was also accused of throwing away his legacy. He was the target of withering attacks from the

leadership of the Democratic Party, organized liberalism, and the civil rights movement. He suffered a drastic loss of funding from unions, churches, foundations, and wealthy liberals and was completely cut off from former allies in the government by the Johnson administration. King's response was to hold his ground and link his civil rights and antiwar demands. Pushing ahead despite resistance from most of his colleagues in the Southern Christian Leadership Conference and another round of attacks by Democratic liberals, King began organizing the Poor People's Campaign, a radical plan to expand the scope of the civil rights movement into a multiracial, class-based economic justice movement that would channel the discontent expressed in the ghetto riots into a massive nonviolent disruption of the government until it came through with jobs or income for all to end poverty. At the time, King appeared isolated. Within a few years, public opinion had joined him in opposition to the war. Today, his courage in standing against the war and attacking systemic poverty and exploitation are seen as integral to his whole legacy.

Like King, Nader defied the Democratic Party leadership by campaigning independently against a war and a system of economic injustice in which the Democrats were fully complicit. Nader also suffered a loss of liberal allies, funding, and access to government officials for doing so. But as important as his antiwar and pro-justice demands were, Nader's greatest legacy may be his insistence on the right of the people to have alternatives to the two corporate-sponsored parties.

But instead of supporting Nader in 2004 and leading the opposition to the war and corporate domination, the Green Party was divided. Many Greens, probably a strong majority, did want to launch another all-out assault on the corporate-sponsored bipartisan consensus. Others, in an effort to prove they wouldn't "spoil" another election, supported the Democratic ticket as the lesser evil, either directly, or indirectly -- with a "safe states" strategy of not competing in the battleground states. In a close vote in the second round of balloting, the Green National Convention chose to run a low-profile campaign with an unknown candidate, David Cobb, whose approach was to support Kerry's attempt to beat Bush.

Unfortunately, by taking this "safe" route, the Green Party handed the Democrats and the media the club with which they were able to cripple the Nader/Camejo campaign. The typical headline around the world read "Greens Reject Nader," with Cobb's nomination mentioned as an afterthought in the text. [5] "By nominating Cobb," a Los Angeles Times article noted, "the Greens have a candidate 'with zero name recognition,' said Dean Spiliotes, a fellow at the New Hampshire Institute of Politics. 'It may be a good exercise in building up the party on the local level, but it means the party will drop off the radar. It's a shock, but it is great news for Kerry.'" [6]

Nader consistently accounted for around 5 to 7 percent of prospective votes in the polls in the few months leading up to the Green National Convention in June 2004. After the convention, his poll numbers dropped to 3 to 5 percent during the summer battle for ballot lines and dropped again to 1 to 2 percent after Labor Day. [7] After the initial mention of Cobb's victory over Nader at the Green convention, Cobb was out of the national media for the rest of the campaign. With most of the left and organized liberalism, including the peace movement, supporting Kerry, and with no strong opposition ticket backed by the Green Party, there was no broad challenge to the war,

militarism, and corporate rule in 2004.

Questionable Legitimacy of the Green Convention

The legitimacy of Cobb's nomination was a matter of debate even before the result was in at the convention. One source of controversy was the complicated formula used to determine how many delegates each state was entitled to. The formula incorporated the electoral college vote (the traditional corporate-party model dating back to before the Civil War), National Committee delegates (akin to Super Delegates in the corporate-party model and based on a "bounded proportionality" formula that magnified the voting power of small states even more than the electoral college), Voting Strength (Bonus Delegates in the corporate-party model, in this case, the 2000 Nader vote), and Elected Greens (Bonus Delegates in the corporate-party model). [8] The net effect of the representation scheme was to overrepresent states with small Green parties and underrepresent states with big ones. The small parties, many of them not capable on their own of successfully petitioning for a ballot line in the general election, tended to vote overwhelmingly for Cobb. The big parties, notably California and New York, with two-thirds of all the registered Greens in the U.S. between them, voted overwhelmingly for Nader.

Adding to the controversy were the convention rules. The rules were approved by the National Committee beforehand and could not be amended by the convention delegates. The national Green Party bylaws make the National Committee sovereign over the broader National Convention. Many delegates were dismayed at this obvious contradiction of the Green principle of grassroots democracy. The platform could not be amended, only voted up or down by the convention delegates. By contrast, even the Democrats and Republicans have provisions requiring that minority planks with at least 20 percent support in the platform committee be reported to the convention floor for a final debate and vote. The rules for voting on the nomination were also controversial. They required the convention to first vote for no nominee in order to then consider a motion for the endorsement of the Nader/Camejo independent ticket, a complicated process that many delegates felt was biased against a Nader/Camejo endorsement.

Going into the convention, Cobb had received only 12 percent of the cumulative vote of the five states that had Green Party primaries and minority support in most of the other states that held caucuses and conventions. Nader supporters had to vote for stand-in candidates in most states who said they wanted Nader to be endorsed. [9] Yet Cobb had come into Milwaukee with the plurality of delegates pledged to him and came out with a slight majority and the nomination in the end. The problem here was that there was no rule stipulating that delegates had to be elected from states in proportion to the support each candidate had. The Green primary, caucus, and convention votes were, in effect, merely beauty contests. The delegations were chosen separately from the presidential voting in most states. Cobb's campaign was able to recruit pro-Cobb delegates in far greater proportion than the presidential preference voting for Cobb by rank-and-file Greens, especially in the many small state parties with disproportionately big delegations.

A year earlier it had seemed clear the Green Party was intent on running an all-out independent campaign in 2004. Meeting in Washington, D.C., on July 17–20, 2003, the

Green National Committee spent most of Friday discussing its 2004 presidential campaign strategy. Ralph Nader sent a message that said he was a possible candidate. Former congresswoman Cynthia McKinney of Georgia sent a message regarding her possible candidacy, saying "nothing can be ruled out." And David Cobb circulated his strategic-states plan among the delegates. Cobb's memo said the Greens should drop out if Kucinich or Sharpton won the Democratic nomination, run all-out if Lieberman won the nomination, or, in the most likely event, follow a "strategic states" plan "if a marginally 'moderate' (but still woefully inadequate) candidate wins the Democratic Party nomination Most of our resources should be focused on those states where the electoral college votes are not 'in play,'" he wrote. "The Green Party can run a strong campaign in 2004 that grows our party, garners millions of votes, and culminates with George Bush losing the election." [10]

But Cobb's approach did not have much support at the National Committee meeting. While there was no binding vote, a straw poll was taken late Friday in which people were asked to go to three different corners of the room to get a sense of where people stood on the question of strategy. One option was to not run at all. Only a few people went to that corner. A second option was to run a "tactical" campaign, whether it was making a late exit in a close race (suggested by Green Horizon Quarterly editor John Rensenbrink and party co-chair Tom Seigny [11]), adopting Ted Glick's safe-states strategy, [12] or following Cobb's strategic-states strategy. At best, that corner had 25 percent of those in attendance. Conservatively, 75 percent of the Greens went to the corner that stood for an all-out campaign against both corporate parties.

The Washington Post headline on July 21, 2003, read, "Greens Want Candidate in 2004; At Party Meeting, Most Rule Out Supporting a Democrat." The reaction from liberal Democrats was to attack. For example, under the headline "Gang Green" on July 23, Michael Tomasky wrote in the liberal American Prospect Online: "The Democrats can cure their Ralph Nader problem by attacking him -- immediately and ferociously." Tomasky called for a Democrat like Howard Dean "with at least one leg in the liberal soil" to blast Nader and Cynthia McKinney, the other leading candidate among Greens, as anti-Semites for their criticisms of Israeli policies. [13] Democratic leaders like Terry McAuliffe, the chairman of the Democratic National Committee, and Bill Richardson, governor of New Mexico, hit the airwaves decrying another Nader run. More articles from writers identified with the left, like Michael Albert on Znet and Tom Hayden on AlterNet, hit the e-mail circuits, calling for a safe-states approach by the Green Party. [14] The Anybody-But-Bush movement became fixated on Anybody But Nader.

Cobb Allies with Anybody But Bush (or Nader)

With the Democrats' and progressive media's Anybody-But-Nader blitz providing a tailwind, the Cobb campaign continued to hammer away at Nader, making the political issues at stake personal. The tactic began to work. In December 2002, Peter Camejo had drafted an open letter to Ralph Nader from eight 2002 Green gubernatorial candidates, appealing to him to run again in 2004. [15] But two of these signers, David Bacon of New Mexico and Jill Stein of Massachusetts, changed their mind in late 2003. Bacon appeared at a Kucinich fund-raiser and publicly reregistered as a Democrat. [16] Stein, who was now running for state representative, told Nader in December that his candidacy would turn Democratic voters against Green candidates like her.

Micah Sifry's "Ralph Redux?" carried the torch for the Cobb campaign into The Nation. Sifry's article highlighted Cobb's candidacy for the nomination, his strategic-states plan, and his objections to Nader. Despite having witnessed the straw poll at the National Committee meeting, Sifry claimed, incredibly, that those supporting an all-out run were "a distinct minority."

All the Greens Sifry quoted were against a Nader run, including three Green elected officials, Medea Benjamin of Global Exchange, and John McChesney, coeditor of the socialist Monthly Review. The quote from John Rensenbrink of Maine summed up how the Cobb campaign's case for a lesser-evil strategy was being linked to a personal attack on Nader:

People ... are very focused on stopping the right-wing cabal that has taken over the country. Therefore, the focus has to be on defeating Bush. Beyond that, the Green Party needs to project a sense of urgency around saving the country, saving the Constitution, saving the planet. There's a concern that we'll be deflected from that message because of the baggage Ralph Nader has from 2000. I doubt he can get over 1 percent of the vote. He'll have to spend a lot of time dealing with the "spoiler" question, unfairly, but that's where it is. I'd add to that that he doesn't want to be a Green, he runs with his coterie rather than party organizers, he doesn't involve local Green leaders and he doesn't get the racial issue. I fear if Nader runs, he'll drag down every other Green in this country. I love him, but this is sheer practical politics.

Dean Myerson, the recently resigned political director of the Green Party, emphasized the safe-states strategy: "The best strategy to build the party is to not focus on states where we'll do poorly. Why should we hook ourselves to the Democrats' strategy and campaign against them? We should campaign in non-battleground states and safe states." [17]

Myerson put this approach to the Greens directly in his "Statement on Green Strategy 2004 and Call for Dialogue and Action," which was signed by eighteen Greens. Calling the lesser-evil concept "instructive," the signers recognized the Democrats as the lesser of two evils and named defeating Bush as the primary objective for Greens in 2004. They called for debate over which strategy would best achieve that goal: "from not running at all, to running in ways that will focus our campaign energies in certain states, to calls to possibly drop out of the race near election day if it is very close." [18]

Roots of the 2004 Division

Most of the signers of this statement had long been leaders of the American Greens' liberal faction, which has gradually distanced itself from the radicalism of the original Green Party organization in the U.S. The original Green Party organization was called

the Committees of Correspondence (1984–1989), then Green Committees of Correspondence (1989–1991), and then Green Party USA (GPUSA, 1991–2001).

After the first national program was adopted in 1990, the liberal tendency's leadership began a split based on a separate Green Party Organizing Committee (1990–1992), which became the Green Politics Network (1992–present), and finally the Association of State Green Parties (ASGP, 1996–2001). They also form the leadership of today's Green Institute, a Green policy think tank.

In 2001, the majority of the Green Party USA joined with the Association of State Green Parties to form today's Green Party of the United States under the terms of an agreement called the Boston Proposal. A small remnant of the old Green Party USA that rejected the Boston Proposal still exists under that name.

The issues the liberals raised in justifying their split contained the seeds of the division of Greens between the Nader/Camejo and Cobb/LaMarche tickets in 2004. The liberals stood for moderating the socialistic nature of the Green Party USA's economic program, for establishing a system of indirect representation by substituting a federation of state parties for the national membership organization, and for being open to cross-endorsing Democrats. [19]

The original impetus for the liberals' split was the anti-capitalist thrust of the first national Green program adopted in 1990. As one of their leaders, Nancy Allen of Maine, put it on the ASGP Coordinating Committee listserv in 2000 during unity talks with GPUSA, "Are you aware that many of the original members of the Green Party Organizing Committee of the Green Committees of Correspondence, which evolved into the ASGP, ... had real problems with the economic vision as a strategy in that document? ... and that was one of the reasons that precipitated the split." [20] John Rensenbrink complained that the GPUSA's program "had a kneejerk anticapitalist and pro-socialist cast to it." [21] Although it was the initial precipitator of the split in the Greens, the economic program was not a factor in the division of 2004. Both Nader and Cobb are nondogmatic and pragmatic reformers when it comes to questions of ownership forms, markets, planning, and regulation.

While the economic program was in the background, the GPUSNASGP fight was expressed more in terms of organizational differences. GPUSA was based on individual members, with voting in its National Committee and convention based on delegations proportional to membership in local and state affiliates. It was based on the German Green model of "base democracy," or grassroots democracy, as the American Greens termed it. In this structure, representatives were elected by and accountable to assemblies open to all local members at the base. ASGP argued that the national party should be a federation of state Green parties, with each state party conforming to the statutory requirements of ballot-line parties. These requirements are different for each state and territory, but they generally prescribe party governance by a representative elite in county and state committees selected by petition or primary, not by membership assemblies at the base. ASGP argued for replacing the individual membership model with the representational model used by the two big corporate parties, which was based on abstractions like the electoral college vote, rather than living, breathing members of the party. The electoral college vote was the original

corporate party basis for convention delegations, to which Bonus Delegates for voting strength and Super Delegates for National Committee members and elected officials were later added. In adopting these abstractions to determine state party delegations, the Green Party in the U.S. moved away from its principle of grassroots democracy, where representatives came from membership assemblies and voting strength was proportional to the number of Greens on the ground, not abstractions like the electoral college. [22] It was this abstract structure of representation at the 2004 convention in Milwaukee that enabled the small parties representing a minority of Greens and supporting Cobb to outvote the big parties representing a majority of Greens and supporting Nader.

The other seed of the division in 2004 was the liberal tendency's long-standing openness to selective endorsement of corporate-party candidates. At the first national Green organizing meeting in St. Paul, Minnesota, in August 1984, opinion was divided on whether to organize an independent Green Party, a Green movement that tried to influence both major parties, or a Green Party that took an inside/outside approach, challenging both parties in some races and sometimes endorsing the better of the major-party candidates. Charlene Spretnak, whose book, *Green Politics*, instigated the St. Paul meeting, had suggested that "a bipartisan caucus is probably the shrewdest approach, although Green candidates could run at the local level as Independents." [23] In a follow-up article in *The Nation*, Spretnak suggested that Democratic presidential candidate Gary Hart's 'new ideas' may turn out to be surprisingly Green." [24] One of the Democrats' leading "neoliberals," as they were called at that time, Hart supported military modernization for fast, flexible intervention -- that today we associate with Bush's defense secretary, Donald Rumsfeld -- as well as the pro-corporate turn toward deregulation, privatization, and regressive tax reforms taken by both corporate parties in the late 1970s. This perspective was quite different from the radicals who were beginning to organize an independent Green Party in the United States because they were attracted by the German Greens' recent electoral victories based on their anti-militarist and anticapitalist program of that period.

When the liberals' Green Party Organizing Committee met in Boston in February 1991, they issued a statement that opened the door to endorsing corporate-party candidates:

The meeting approved a guiding declaration with respect to the question of support for candidates in either of the two major parties: "We strongly recommend that local and state Green parties concentrate their efforts on mounting their own candidacies and forming their own parties. Endorsement of other candidates and participation in caucuses in other parties should be carefully considered, and undertaken only when they advance the cause of Green ideals and the development of the Green movement." [25]

Leading up to the 1996 election, the Green Politics Network sponsored a series of third-party meetings to which they invited the New Party, the Labor Party, the Socialist

Party, the Libertarian Party, the Natural Law Party, the Patriot Party (the faction of the Perot movement headed by the old New Alliance Party of Fred Newman and Lenora Fulani), the Independent Progressive Politics Network, California's Peace and Freedom Party, and state Green parties. Organized around the theme of "Transcending Left, Right, and Center: Building the New Mainstream" and with the goal of running a coalition-backed presidential candidate, this motley collection of political tendencies blurred the meaning of independent politics. Rather than defining the term as freedom from the corporate power structure and the parties it sponsors, the conferences suggested that any party that was not Democrat or Republican was "independent," even if the party was not anticorporate, or, like the New Party, sought coalition with the Democrats.

One of the ironies of 2004 is that the liberal tendency harshly criticized Nader for running as a coalition-backed independent and for attending a forum on independent politics sponsored by the Newman/Fulani group. But in 1996 these same liberals had sought to run coalition-backed independent candidates separate from the existing Green Party USA, a coalition into which they invited the opportunistic Newman/Fulani group. [26]

What Is Political Independence?

Another contradiction in the liberal Greens' position in 2004 is that while they gave indirect support to Kerry through the safe-states approach, they criticized Nader for not being a Green. They presented a sectarian notion of political independence as being independent of everyone who is not a Green, blurring the important distinction between corporate-sponsored Democrats and Ralph Nader who stands with the Greens on the issues. That sectarian conception of political independence is still being articulated by some Greens in the post-election period who maintain the Greens should only nominate Green Party members.

A nonsectarian notion of political independence for the Greens would mean being open to alliances with every progressive independent candidate and party that is opposed to the corporate rulers and the two parties they sponsor. In practice, this notion would mean the Greens do not support Democrats or Republicans in elections. But they would be open to supporting other independent progressive candidates and parties who are independent of corporate sponsorship and share Green platform goals.

It is a question of class. Do the Greens want rule by the corporate elite or rule by the people? This nonsectarian notion of political independence paves the way for productive electoral alliances with other movements that share the Greens' goal of abolishing corporate rule and establishing real democracy, whether it is through a progressive independent like Ralph Nader, or a new insurgent labor-, Black-, or Chicano-based party, or a state-based independent progressive party, such as the Progressive Party of Vermont, the Mountain Party of West Virginia, the United Citizens Party of South Carolina, or the Peace and Freedom Party of California. Openness to these kind of electoral alliances made for the productive Green/Nader alliances in 1996 and 2000 and for the mergers between the Greens and Black-based political formations in Massachusetts (Green-Rainbow Party) and Washington, D.C. (DC Statehood Green Party). The Greens' concept of independent politics should embrace

these kinds of alliances among the people against corporate rule. It should not be the Greens against everybody else. It should be the Greens with the people against the corporate ruling class.

Another problematic notion of political independence that is circulating in the post-election period is the idea of an "independent" movement that works inside and outside the Democratic Party. The Greens should acknowledge that there are some genuine progressives in the Democratic Party and work with them on advancing shared policy goals between elections. But the Greens should not support them in elections, because doing so undermines the Greens' very identity as an alternative to corporate rule. Why should voters accept the Greens' argument for independent alternatives if the Greens do not have enough confidence in themselves to run their own candidates?

The Democratic Party as an institution is funded and controlled by its corporate wing. Progressives in the Democratic Party serve to give it a progressive veneer, making it marketable to progressive constituencies, while the policy direction remains firmly in the hands of its corporate-sponsored leadership. The Kucinich campaign demonstrated this function of progressives in the Democratic Party in 2004 when it sought to bring Greens and Nader voters into the Democratic coalition. In the end, however, Kucinich was obliged to campaign for Kerry, who stood against Kucinich's entire platform, from ending the Iraq war and the Patriot Act to instituting national health insurance and fair trade policies.

When a progressive Democrat refuses to buckle to the corporate line, the Democrats isolate him or her. The Democratic Party abandoned Cynthia McKinney when the Democratic Leadership Council allied with Republicans to defeat her in 2002. When she won her seat back in 2004, the Democratic leadership in Congress refused to restore her ten-year seniority, as the Democrats had traditionally done in the past for returning members and as the Republicans also do for their members. The denial of seniority prevented McKinney from resuming her role as thorn in the side of U.S. foreign policy on the House International Relations Committee and its Human Rights Subcommittee. [27]

Without having adopted a principle of political independence, and there being no consensus in the Greens on the very meaning of independent political action, it is not surprising that the Green Party was divided on how to respond to the Anybody-But-Bush tsunami from liberal and left leadership circles. Nor is it surprising that the liberal tendency in the U.S. Greens chose to ally with Anybody But Bush through the safe-states approach. [28]

Pushing Nader Away from the Greens

Cobb had been part of the liberals' leadership network since soon after joining the Greens in 1996, and he carried its safe-states message into the nomination race in 2004. As a December 2003 report on his editorial board meeting with the San Antonio Express-News put it, "Cobb's strategy is to concentrate on the forty or so 'safe' states where Bush or a Democrat is likely to win. That way he builds the Green Party without helping Bush Cobb said that if his strategy had been in place in 2000, Al Gore would be president today because Nader would not have siphoned off votes from the

Democrats in key states." [29]

Cobb would soon find that such open support for the lesser evil through the safe-states strategy was generally unpopular among the Greens. Many Greens realized that if they were not willing to risk "spoiling" elections for the Democrats, there was no point in running Green candidates at all. Cobb particularly irked many Greens by repeating the Democrats' claim that Nader's campaign was responsible for Bush's election. Blaming Nader absolved the Republicans of their suppression of the Black vote in Florida, the Democrats of their refusal to challenge it, and the U.S. Supreme Court of their selection of Bush, where the majority opinion stated that "the individual citizen has no federal constitutional right to vote" in presidential elections. [30] Blaming Nader excused the electoral college system that denied victory to Gore, who won the national popular vote. Blaming Nader perpetuated the corporate media's suppression of their own comprehensive ballot recount finding that Gore actually won the Florida vote. [31] If one accepts that Nader cost Gore two states (New Hampshire and Florida), then one must also acknowledge that Buchanan cost Bush in four states (Oregon, Iowa, Wisconsin, and New Mexico) and that Buchanan cost Gore Florida due to the deceptive butterfly ballot in Palm Beach County. One can cite dozens of conditions necessary for Bush to prevail over Gore. Singling out Nader was more about stopping Nader and the Greens than explaining what really happened in 2000. [32]

Finding "safe states" unpopular with many Greens, Cobb opted to brand his lesser-evil plan less explicitly, calling it the "smart growth strategy." In this version, Cobb said his primary objective was to build the Green Party and his secondary objective was to defeat Bush. He also added that he would campaign in battleground states if Green state parties there wanted him to, although it was doubtful his campaign had the capacity to get on the ballot in many of those states. [33]

Still, it was not Cobb's "smart growth strategy" that won him the nomination. No one has surveyed all the Green convention delegates to see why they voted as they did, but the anecdotal testimony on Green e-mail lists shows that many delegates who wanted an all-out run against the corporate duopoly nevertheless voted for Cobb because they perceived Nader as having abandoned the Green Party when he chose to run independently. That testimony also shows that Cobb supporters emphasized that spin on Nader's decision as they attempted to recruit and win over delegates.

Whatever the pro-Cobb delegates' reasons, it is clear that Cobb and his supporters worked hard to keep Nader from being the Green nominee again in 2004. As Jack Uhrich, finance director of the national Green Party U.S. until December 2003, would write to the Green Party e-mail discussion list in February 2004:

I was very surprised, when I joined the USGP (United States Green party) staff in October 2001, to find that several members of the USGP leadership were already actively campaigning against Ralph running for President in 2004, and, according to prior leaders I talked to, this had been going on at least since right after the 2000 campaign ended In my opinion, it was the actions of several members of the USGP leadership that drove Ralph away

from the party, after he held many fundraisers for us, nationally, statewide and locally, and was constantly in the media during and after the 2000 elections, urging people to join the Green Party. [34]

Most of the party's officers in the 2000–2004 period would work to prevent Nader from running again as the Greens' presidential candidate, including David Cobb, the party's legal counsel; Dean Myerson, the political coordinator in the D.C. office; Steve Schmidt, the chair of the Platform Committee; Greg Gerritt, the party secretary; and party co-chairs Mamie Glickman, Ben Manski, Nathalie Paravicini, Anita Rios, and Tom Sevigny. Many Greens were as surprised by Urich's comments as he had been by what he witnessed when he joined the staff. The actions against another Nader candidacy by the national officers were conducted without the consent of, or even any discussion with, the party's National Committee of state party representatives.

Annie Goeke, a party co-chair until 2002 who served as the party's liaison with Nader after the 2000 election, did try to maintain the partnership that the Greens had with Nader in the 1996–2000 period. The partnership should not have been difficult to maintain given the mutually compatible concerns on both sides: the Greens' desire to be perceived as more than the Ralph Nader party and Nader's wish to remain an independent who was not formally affiliated with any political party. Goeke tried to get the national officers and Nader to agree that the best role for Nader was to remain an independent who supported the Greens. He would support the Greens through fund-raising and in issue-based and election campaigns without becoming involved in internal decision-making. However, Goeke quickly found herself isolated among the national officers in trying to maintain the Green end of this arms-length partnership. After a six-hour meeting between the party's officers and Nader about ten days after the 2000 election, David Cobb told Goeke she was "starstruck." Cobb and other officers began arguing that the Greens had grown beyond Nader and could better appeal to Democratic voters without him. [35]

Nader continued to hold up his end of the partnership, though. Between the 2000 election and the approach of the 2004 campaign, Nader would go to forty-five Green fund-raisers in thirty-one states at his own expense, raising more money than anyone for the Green Party and its state and local affiliates. He praised the Green Party U.S. and its platform in his 2001 book, *Crashing the Party*, as he also did regularly in his public speeches and media interviews. [36] He shared his 2000 campaign volunteer lists with party organizers and the 2000 campaign donor list with the national party. [37] Either he or close staffers attended national Green meetings and met with Greens internationally. Despite this support, most of the national officers of the Green Party wanted to distance Nader from the Greens.

On June 14, 2003, the Green Party of Texas met in Bastrop. There, at the initiative of David Cobb, a decision with national ramifications was made. The party voted to add a new article on the "Presidential Candidate" to its bylaws which would require that in order to be on the Green Party ballot line in Texas, a presidential candidate must be a member of his or her state's Green Party. That, obviously, was directed against Nader,

who had long said he would always remain an independent.

Cobb, formerly of Texas but by then a California resident, dominated much of the Texas convention, according to reports by Paul Cardwell, a delegate who was chair of the Green Party of Fannin County, Texas, and Ramsey Sprague, a delegate who was treasurer of the Green Party of Tarrant County, Texas. As Cardwell wrote, "I was inclined to support Cobb until the 2003 Texas state convention in Bastrop. There I changed positions totally. I am chair of the Fannin County (TX) party and was a delegate to that convention. Even though no longer a resident of Texas, Cobb ran the convention with an iron hand, often from the chair, and always giving orders to whomever was presiding."

Sprague reported how Cobb attempted to pack the state executive committee with supporters by proposing a limited-approval voting method by which each delegate had two "yes" votes. Sprague noted that "by allowing 'no' votes in Mr. Cobb's voting method, a well organized clique could determine the outcome of an election by voting 'yes' for their candidate and 'no' for all other candidates." Delegates tried to reject this winner-take-all plurality method of voting proposed by Cobb for the proportional method of preference voting, where delegates would rank their choices in order of preference, which is what the Texas party bylaws actually required. But Sprague reports, "Mr. Cobb either vehemently denied others the opportunity to speak for or against his proposal or berated them as delegates sought more democratic alternatives." [38]

As a former Texas staff member of a proportional representation advocacy group -- the Center for Voting and Democracy -- Cobb no doubt understood the implications of his voting proposal.

Uhrich reflected the anguish many Greens felt about the Texas bylaw amendment and other maneuvers to separate Nader from the Greens:

[The Texas bylaw change] is just one of a number of examples where some of our leaders made Ralph feel unnecessarily unwelcome in our party. Some of these actions were innocent enough, though dumb, in my estimation, like not featuring Ralph to do the reply to the State of the Union message. Others were deliberate, like the Texas resolution That is part of the reason I find myself so torn about this whole thing. On the one hand, I want to build a party and stay within the democratic guidelines we set to make this decision; on the other, I believe that the one person who has done the most to build that party (and we now see by the polls that he did as good a job as any of us in attracting Black and Latino support -- actually doing better than attracting white support), was rejected in a number of ways, sometimes by those who are now complaining that he's not running as a Green. Or is it that he's running at all that angers them? Were they so arrogant to think that, if he didn't run as a Green he wouldn't run at all, and so they felt free to either force him out or try to force him to run as they wanted? If that is the case, they obviously miscalculated, and now, not only are they stuck, but we are all stuck with this mess." [39]

Re: Independent Politics: The Green Party Strategy Debate

by **admin**

Posted: **Sun Aug 09, 2015 10:32 pm**

PART 2 OF 2

Nader's Green Path Not Taken

Seeing the Greens divided between independent and lesser-evil strategies in late 2003 and not organized to make a decision until the June 2004 convention, Nader reluctantly concluded that his best option was to declare his candidacy as an independent and then ask the Greens for their endorsement as part of a coalition candidacy should he decide to run.

"I write this with regret," Nader wrote in his December 23, 2003, letter to the Greens withdrawing his name from consideration as the Green presidential nominee, "because of my support for your platform and civic activities, because of our shared political history and because of the numerous efforts I have made, over the years since 1996, to help grassroots Greens build the Party." He noted that

as part of my exploratory effort, I have met or spoken with Greens from all over the country in extensive conversations, heard from even more through sign-on letters, Kucinich supporters, Greens for Dean, state and local Green groups, newspaper and magazine accounts, including the Green Pages and Green Horizon, etc., all of which illustrate how the reaction to George W. Bush, has fractured -- more than galvanized -- the Greens as a Party.

Nader concluded that "uncertainty expressed by the Party's leadership regarding the conditions under which the Party may or may not field Presidential and Vice-presidential candidates in 2004 can only be interpreted as a confused retreat."

Nader went on to cite several factors that he felt made a Green run by him impractical. He said the fact that the Greens were waiting until the June 2004 convention before deciding whether to run a candidate and, if so, whether to run safe states or all out, made it difficult for a serious candidate to raise funds and seek ballot access. He also expressed concern that some state Green parties had resolved to deny independents not registered in the Green Party access to their states' ballot line. He closed the letter on an amicable note: "In the event that I should still decide to become a presidential candidate, any collaborative efforts that are possible, especially at the state and local level, would be welcome." [40]

Nader's decision to run as an independent, which some of his non-Green supporters had been pushing him to do since 2002, opened the door for Cobb's anti-Nader campaign and made it problematic for the Greens for Nader network that had been organized in 2003 to build support for a Green-backed Nader run. Most Greens believe that Nader overestimated the influence of the national party leadership on the nomination and convention process. If Nader had gone over the heads of the liberal

leadership and appealed directly to the Green base for the nomination in Milwaukee, he probably would have won handily, as even Cobb's supporters concede. [41] States like Texas, that had said they would not put an independent on their state ballot line, probably would have gone along with the national party decision to back Nader and put him on the ballot. Certainly Nader would have risked losing a state ballot line or two running for a Green Party divided on whether to run all-out against both corporate parties. But ballot petitioning for a few additional states would have been much less of a burden than petitioning for all fifty states and Washington, D.C. Had he chosen to seek the Green nomination, it is likely he would have won it and headed up a Green presidential campaign that still had a solid majority of Greens backing him.

In the six months between Nader's decision not to seek the Green nomination and the Green National Convention, Nader was ambiguous with some states about whether he would run on the Green line or an independent line. That hurt him with many Green supporters who were inclined to support his endorsement only if he would appear on their state's Green ballot line. It also lent credibility to Cobb supporters' allegations that Nader had used and then abandoned the Greens. With Nader not seeking votes and convention delegates in Green primaries, caucuses, and conventions, it was difficult for Greens for Nader to win delegates committed to Nader in some states. And both his declaration of candidacy at the end of February and his choice of Camejo as his running mate in June came too late for pro-Nader Greens to maximize support in their respective state parties.

Unable to use the Green's existing twenty-two state ballot lines, Nader had to mount a monumental fifty-state ballot drive. The scale and viciousness of the Democratic campaign to deny him ballot access was probably heightened by the fact that they perceived that they could demonize Nader without alienating the whole Green movement. Nor did it help that in the early months of the campaign Nader tried to deflect the Democratic attacks about "spoiling" the 2004 election by arguing that his campaign would help defeat Bush. That argument simply undercut the rationale for his own independent challenge to both of the corporate-sponsored parties. And it muffled the distinction between his approach of running all-out in all states and Cobb's safe-states approach.

Nader almost went to the Milwaukee convention at the last minute. A number of delegates who voted for Cobb have said this would have changed their vote. Most in the Nader camp at the convention wanted Nader there, but some did not, fearing disrespect from some on the Cobb side in the form of heckling or worse. Nader heard both sides and finally decided to phone in to the Nader/Camejo rally at the convention Friday night before Saturday's presidential nomination vote. Nader's message over the phone hook-up reiterated what he had said in his letters: he would welcome the Greens' endorsement but felt it best that he continue to stay out of the internal politicking and let the Greens make that decision on their own. In a debate Thursday night among the candidates present, Cobb had made the most of Nader's absence. He argued that a Nader candidacy with a Green endorsement as part of a coalition would not build the Green Party. Cobb underscored that claim with the statement: "Ralph Nader is not here. That says something. "

After the convention, many Green activists worked for the Nader/Camejo campaign

rather than the official Cobb/LaMarche ticket. For these Greens, the Nader/Camejo campaign embodied independent Green politics, which they saw as the most effective strategy for resisting the hard right and challenging the bipartisan consensus around militaristic neoliberalism. In New York, for example, the Green Party's state committee budgeted \$5,000 to support the national nominee's ballot-access drive with staff and other resources. But many rank-and-file Greens worked to put Nader/Camejo on the ballot as the Peace and Justice candidate instead. In the end they gathered 28,000 signatures for Nader but only 5,000 for Cobb, well short of the 15,000 good signatures required for a ballot line. At the same time Greens used Nader's campaign stops in Binghamton, Buffalo, Rochester, Albany, New Paltz, and New York City to promote the Green Party, which Nader urged voters to support. Working on the Nader campaign strengthened several Green locals and helped instigate new locals in places like Glens Falls. New York Greens found it was possible to build the Green Party by supporting the independent Nader/Camejo campaign.

The same pattern held true in other parts of the country. Tens of thousands of people attended Nader/Camejo campaign events. Local Greens who worked on these events got the sign-up lists for follow-up organizing. Some of the hundreds of Nader/Camejo volunteers are now working with the Greens, particularly in the Greens for Democracy and Independence network initiated by Peter Camejo after the convention. [42] Others are waiting to see if the Greens will commit themselves to political independence and democratize their internal structures. Where the work done on the Nader/Camejo campaign ultimately leads depends in large part on what the Greens do in the next few years on these questions of political independence and organizational democracy.

If Nader had chosen to go for the Green nomination, there is little doubt not only that he would have won it but that the dynamic of the presidential campaign would have been quite different. The Democrats would not have been able to exploit the Green/Nader division to the detriment of both. Instead, a Green/Nader alliance would have created a strong center of opposition to the war, corporate-dominated domestic policies, and the two-corporate-party political system. That clear opposition might have attracted significant sections of the peace movement and other people's movements away from the Anybody-But-Bush current, possibly accelerating buildup of independent opposition to militarism and corporate domination. But even if it had failed to stimulate the growth of a massive opposition movement during the election, the story of the left in the campaign would have changed. It would have been about Nader and the Greens united at the center of opposition to the Bush-Kerry ticket of war and corporate rule -- not about everybody but Nader, Camejo, and their followers supporting Kerry as the lesser evil.

The Green Vote Nose-dives

It was the perception among many delegates that Nader's supposed abandonment of the Greens, and not Cobb's support for the safe-states strategy, provided Cobb's margin of victory at the Green National Convention. But in fact, it was Cobb's lesser-evil strategy that got the attention in corporate-media coverage and among progressives who embraced the Anybody-But-Bush strategy in 2004. Soon after the convention a statement by prominent progressives endorsed Kerry in the "swing states" and Cobb in the "safe states." [43] As Cobb had put it in a press release leading up to

the Green National Convention, his "strategy will grow the Green Party and not piss off millions of potential Green Party members and supporters." [44] On the second point, Cobb's strategy worked: he did not piss off millions of potential Greens because they never knew he was running.

The Green presidential vote plummeted more than 95 percent, from just short of 2.9 million for Nader in 2000 to just over 0.1 million for Cobb in 2004. Although Cobb claimed that his vote total did not matter much, [45] the number is certainly an important objective standard for measuring support for a campaign. Cobb's total of 119,862 votes was lower in absolute numbers than just about every nonsectarian, independent progressive presidential campaign since the two-corporate-party system solidified after the Civil War, including all the nineteenth-century populist farmer-labor tickets beginning in 1872, the Debsian Socialist Party campaign, the independent Progressive campaigns of Robert LaFollette in 1924 and Henry Wallace in 1948, the 1980 Citizens Party, and the 1996 and 2000 Green Party tickets. The nineteenth-century vote totals were 7 to 15 million compared to more than 122 million in 2004. Cobb's strategy of focusing campaign resources on the safe states did not yield many votes in the safe states. His vote total can only be seen as a humiliating defeat for his safe-states strategy.

Cobb announced that he would run a "smart states" rather than a "safe states" campaign because he was willing to campaign in a battleground state if Greens there wanted him to do so. But the overall message was clear: the Cobb/LaMarche campaign prioritized the defeat of Bush over winning votes for their own ticket. Cobb's vice-presidential running mate, Pat LaMarche, was quoted at her first press conference after the convention as saying she was not even committed to voting for her own ticket if the Bush/Kerry race was close in her home state of Maine. [46] The Cobb campaign quickly put out a statement saying LaMarche had been misquoted. But she kept being quoted along similar lines right up to just before the election. At a campaign stop at Dartmouth College in New Hampshire, for example, The Dartmouth reported:

LaMarche focused on efforts to remove Bush from office rather than promoting herself. She accepts that voting for a Green candidate is not the feasible way to get this done Although not technically endorsing Sen. John Kerry for the presidency, LaMarche made it clear she sees him as the lesser of two evils. 'I do not say vote for Kerry, I do not say the K word. So he's not perfect, he's the only solution we have,' she said. [47]

Cobb has claimed that "the Green Party continued to grow in 2004. We ran record numbers of candidates, elected more local officials and registered more Green voters than ever before." [48] But those claims cannot be reconciled with the facts. After years of growth, the number of both candidates and winning candidates was reduced. In the last on-year election in 2002, the Greens ran 561 candidates nationwide and 81 of them won office. In 2004, the Greens ran 433 candidates and 70 of them won office. Because local races are nonpartisan in many places, a better comparison is state and

federal candidates, the down-ticket candidates running with the Green presidential candidate at the head of the ticket. Here there was a 121-candidate reduction, from 300 in 2002 to 179 in 2004. [49] As for Green Party registration, after an unbroken trend of steady growth throughout their history, the Greens' party registration totals stagnated during 2004 and early 2005, fluctuating around the 300,000 level. [50]

The Cobb campaign showed little capacity to get on the ballot. Starting with twenty-two established Green Party ballot lines, Cobb was able to get on the ballot in only six more states, all of them in the low end of the range of state petitioning and filing thresholds. Nor was the Cobb campaign able to successfully defend many of the Green ballot lines on election day. The number of state Green parties with ballot lines was reduced from twenty-two at the beginning of 2004 to fifteen after the election. [51] The Nader campaign had to start from scratch and was able to get on the ballot in thirty-five states, despite the Democrats and allied 527 organizations spending an estimated \$10 million to \$20 million to keep Nader off state ballots through intimidation of volunteers and endless lawsuits. [52] Richard Winger of Ballot Access News has said it was the most concerted effort by a major party to deny ballot access to an independent or third-party candidate in U.S. history, surpassed only by the Democrats' campaign in some states to deny ballot access to Earl Browder, the Communist candidate, in 1940.

Political Impact

The most important measure of an election campaign is its political impact. None of the Cobb leadership's postmortems comment on how his campaign affected public opinion on the key issues of the presidential campaign, notably, the bipartisan consensus behind the war in Iraq. All Cobb claims is an image makeover: "A remarkable transformation has taken place in the public's perception of the Green Party We've gone from being seen as spoilers to being hailed as saviors," [53] referring to the Cobb campaign's role in the Ohio recount fight after the election.

In fact, the Green presidential campaign had no impact on the political debate of the campaign. But it did affect the dynamic. By bending to the Anybody-But-Bush strategy of the nation's institutionalized liberal leadership, the Greens took themselves out of the 2004 election as a distinct and oppositional voice and served as Exhibit A for the corporate media's claim that the Nader/Camejo antiwar ticket was marginal: not even the Greens supported it.

If the Greens had united behind the Nader/Camejo antiwar, anti-corporate ticket, a potentially massive opposition bloc might have started growing behind their lead. It is a mistake to conclude that, no matter what the Greens did, progressive voters would have followed liberal leaders' direction and backed Kerry's pro-war, pro-corporate candidacy. [55] The Greens could have been the counterforce to the surrender of the left. After all, conventional wisdom considered Howard Dean unbeatable for several months until his support collapsed in the last two weeks before the Iowa caucuses. We do not know what would have happened if, with a united Green Party spearheading the opposition, sections of the antiwar movement had joined behind a united Green challenge to the bi-partisan war policies of Bush and Kerry. Such a breakaway might have snowballed, attracting key activists in allied pro-justice movements and changing

the whole dynamic of the election campaign and the policy debate. At the least, Green unity behind a resolutely independent candidate would have made the Greens a pole of attraction for the more radical peace and justice activists, particularly among the youth, and laid a strong foundation for future Green electoral insurgencies. As it was the Greens, and the broader left and liberal movements, never gave themselves a chance to find out what they could have accomplished had they stood their political ground instead of collapsing into the Kerry campaign.

Professional Liberals and the Democratic Party

The progressive leadership that led the movements into the Kerry camp was broader than the liberal intelligentsia in the opinion-shaping universities and media. It also included the institutionalized "professional liberals," the paid staff and leaders of the unions and the big environmental, peace, civil rights, women's, gay, and community organizing groups. Selling out to the Democratic Party pays off for the professional liberals in the form of career opportunities and funding. These material benefits flow through social and organizational networks that connect the professional liberals in nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) to their peers in Democratic administrations and the corresponding party organizations that are built from the top down by Democratic patronage and preferment. Corporate funding -- grants for the NGOs, universities, and progressive media, and campaign cash for the Democrats -- cements it all together, co-opting institutionalized progressivism into the service of the corporate-dominated Democratic coalition. [56]

For the rank and file of the labor, community, people of color, women's, gay, and environmental movements, Kerry and the Democrats offered nothing of substance -- not one single progressive program or policy on any front that progressives could rally around. Seeking swing voters, Kerry ran to Bush's right as a war hawk and a deficit hawk, vowing to send more troops to Iraq, to increase forces in the Army and Marines, to increase the military and homeland repression budgets, and to do all that while bringing the federal budget back into balance. His Bush-like sound bites, such as promising "to hunt down and kill the terrorists," made militarism a non-issue in the Bush-Kerry horse race. Given his militaristic priorities and the tax proposals he advanced, a Kerry administration could balance the federal budget only by slashing social spending. Given these parameters, all the professional liberals could offer in support of a vote for Kerry was a defensive apology that Bush would be even worse.

The leaders of the big liberal organizations have been delivering their constituencies to the Democrats for decades. But the Iraq antiwar movement was younger, newer, less institutionalized, and far more dynamic than any other movement going into 2004. Knowing that the Democrats had voted overwhelmingly for Bush's wars and related repressive domestic legislation, [57] the antiwar movement had no rational basis for supporting Kerry's call to escalate the wars on Iraq and terrorism. The peace movement could have been the spearhead of a significant break from the pro-war two-party system in 2004.

The leadership of the biggest antiwar coalition, United for Peace and Justice (UFPJ), decided to focus its efforts on defeating Bush, organizing their one major mobilization in 2004 against the Republican National Convention but not the Democratic

convention. The torture at Abu Ghraib and the slaughter in Najaf passed without a significant response. Rather than crafting a focused antiwar message, UFPJ leaders turned the mobilization at the Republican National Convention into a march "against the Bush agenda," as the lead banner and UFPJ spokespeople made clear.

Most of the antiwar intellectuals and leaders with visibility in the movement -- including Noam Chomsky, Daniel Ellsberg, Howard Zinn, Naomi Klein, Barbara Ehrenreich, Cornel West, Medea Benjamin, Michael Albert, Carl Davidson, and Tom Hayden -- called for a vote for Kerry to defeat Bush. Many of these people, obviously cognizant of the Orwellian nature of their call to vote for peace by voting for pro-war Kerry, tried to have it both ways by issuing statements urging people to vote for Kerry in the competitive "battleground" states and for Cobb in the noncompetitive "safe states." [58] These statements did nothing to move public opinion against the war. But the pro-war corporate media widely reported these statements, using them to dismiss the Nader/Camejo ticket as one that did not even have the support of antiwar leaders.

The Nader/Camejo campaign soldiered on without the Green Party's official support. The Green base was divided, with a major portion of rank-and-file Greens working for the Nader/Camejo ticket. Repelled or disillusioned by the division, some Greens just sat out the 2004 race. Without access to the Greens' twenty-two ballot lines, the Nader/Camejo campaign had to focus nearly all its resources from June until September on ballot petitioning. Excluded again from the presidential debates, Nader and Camejo barnstormed the country focusing their message against the war and the Patriot Act, for reforms to benefit working people, for reforms to make ballot access and elections fair, and for independent politics as the most effective way to fight the right and advance progressive reforms. Nader's 463,647 votes were still far more than the 119,862 that Cobb received on the Green lines, but it was also only one-sixth of the 2,882,782 votes Nader had received in 2000. [59] Nader and Camejo received enough attention and votes to serve as the visible conscience of the peace and other progressive movements, but it was not the massive electoral insurgency against militarism and corporate rule it might have been with the Green Party's support and leadership.

Post-election Demoralization on the Left

The lesser-evil strategy of Anybody But Bush rendered progressive movements demoralized after the election. Not only did they fail to beat Bush, but the self-censorship involved in supporting the pro-war corporate Kerry campaign silenced the voice of the peace and other progressive movements. The professional liberals are blaming the supposedly conservative values of Americans, the tactical mistakes of the Kerry campaign, the sycophancy of the corporate media, everything but their own surrender to the politics of the lesser evil. The more upbeat postelection assessments try to highlight a new progressive institutional infrastructure to support the Democrats, including America Votes, Progressive Majority, Camp Wellstone, Democracy for America, Center for American Progress, Air America Radio, Media Matters, MoveOn.org, and Progressive Democrats of America, groups that are bankrolled in large part by liberal capitalists like currency speculator George Soros, insurance magnate Peter Lewis, and bankers Herb and Marian Sandler, who collectively have pledged to put \$100 million into this infrastructure over the next 15 years. [60] But these assessments

probably say more about career opportunities for professional liberals than the real prospects for any antiwar, anti-corporate insurgency inside the Democratic Party.

In their rank-and-file majority, Democratic voters were against the war in Iraq and for domestic policies that would benefit working people. But in a case of lesser evilism run amok, Democratic progressives defeated themselves by voting for pro-war corporate Kerry as the "electable" candidate in the primaries, leaving the antiwar candidacies of Dennis Kucinich and Al Sharpton with a combined total of barely 1 percent of the Democratic National Convention's delegates. Kucinich kept his campaign going up until the convention on the promise that he would fight there for antiwar and other progressive platform planks. But then, finding that he could not even muster the 20 percent support required for a platform committee minority report to force a vote of the whole convention on his alternative planks, Kucinich withdrew those proposals at the Democratic Platform Committee meeting. He could have at least made the committee members go on record as to where they stood on his progressive planks by calling for a vote on his proposals. But he instructed his people on the committee to drop his platform amendments without calling for a vote. That was how the progressive remnant of the Democratic Party went down to a crushing defeat and gave up without a fight in 2004. [61]

Not only were the movements dispirited, they were also confused by the defensive campaign around Kerry as the lesser evil. They were unable to recognize serious harms when advanced by the "lesser evil" and consequently they were inert as the congressional Democrats' pushed through the Intelligence Reform and Terrorism Prevention Act of 2004 in December. Seeking to bolster their credentials as "National Security Democrats" and one-up the Republicans' antiterrorism warriors, the Democrats goaded a bloc of reluctant moderate Republicans into passing the bill despite their concerns about its further erosion of civil liberties and its concentration of the intelligence apparatus in the hands of the Pentagon. While the creation of the intelligence czar captured the headlines, the small print in the bill enacted key elements of Bush's proposed Patriot Act II, including steps toward a national ID card with federal standardization of state drivers' licenses and ID cards, expanded FBI powers to conduct secret searches and surveillance, detention without bail for accused terrorists indicted by grand juries, and sharing secret grand-jury information with foreign and domestic law enforcement agencies.

When the new session of Congress convened in 2005, Democrats provided comfortable margins of victory for a string of Republican initiatives: a bankruptcy bill that virtually restores debt peonage; a tort reform bill that closes the state courts to many class-action suits against corporate crimes; and an anti-conservation, pronuclear energy bill. When Bush asked in March for authorization to spend \$82 billion more for the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, the Senate approved it 99-0, and only thirty-four Democrats in the House, less than 20 percent of the Democratic caucus, voted against further funding of the occupations.

The Failure of Lesser-Evil Strategies

Compare 1968 to 2004. Nineteen sixty-eight also had an election in which both corporate-party candidates supported an increasingly unpopular war. But in 1968, the

antiwar movement came out of the election stronger and energized, not demoralized. The Movement, as it was called, had learned its lesson in 1964. The lesser–evil slogan of Students for a Democratic Society (SDS), "Part of the Way with LBJ," captured the strategy for most of the left in 1964, when Goldwater called for escalation in Vietnam and Johnson promised "no wider war." But after Johnson won the election and escalated anyway, in 1968 the radical currents of the antiwar movement decided to maintain their independence from the corporate–party candidates. There were also liberal tendencies in the peace movement willing to compromise the Movement's "Out Now" demand in order to support Eugene McCarthy, who called for negotiations, or Robert Kennedy, who advocated what would be called "Vietnamization" under Nixon. But in doing so, the liberals were abandoning the clear antiwar demand that motivated most peace activists and their fast–growing sympathizers in the general public.

The radical tendency led protests against the war at the Democratic as well as Republican conventions. They came out of the election bigger and broader, more organized and energized. We now know from Nixon's memoirs, among other sources, that his "secret plan to end the war," which helped get him elected in 1968, was to massively escalate the war with an invasion of North Vietnam and tactical nuclear bombing if North Vietnam did not agree to his terms. Called Operation Duck Hook, the nuclear target folders were drawn up and the deadline for North Vietnam's capitulation set for November 1, 1969. But the massive nationwide October 15, 1969, Vietnam Moratorium, a sort of one–day general strike, convinced him that it would cost him massive domestic rebellion, not to mention the 1972 election, if he carried out his secret plan. The peace movement in the streets, not the Democrats in office, made Nixon back down. [62]

Unfortunately, many of the veterans of 1968 forgot that lesson in 2004. Besides Tom Hayden's quip about "voting with the CIA" as the lesser evil, there was the influential paper by Chicago–based veteran activists Carl Davidson and Marilyn Katz, "Moving From Protest to Politics: Dumping Bush's Regime in 2004." Timed to influence United for Peace and Justice's upcoming June 2003 conference in Chicago, it provided a theoretical rationale for supporting the lesser evil: the left should support the "globalist" imperialists in the Democrats as the lesser evil to the "unilateralist" imperialists around Bush. It advocated a classic Popular Front strategy of the left allying with the liberal wing of the ruling class in order to defeat its right wing. [63]

But the Popular Front strategy has a history of defeat. The left was crushed under the Popular Front strategies followed in Spain, France, and Germany in the 1930s. In the United States, the impetus for progressive reform was lost when in 1936 the labor movement and the Communist Party took the popular movements and the left into the Democratic Party, which could then take them for granted and move to the right. [64]

A peculiarly American version of the lesser–evil strategy has been the practice of fusion where progressives have supported candidates running on both a third–party line and a major–party line. Practiced widely by the populist farmer–labor parties of the late nineteenth century, the populists were repeatedly betrayed by their major–party partners, until they finally self–destructed when they supported the fusion presidential candidacy of Democrat William Jennings Bryan in 1896. Progressives in New York State, where fusion is still legal, have seen the American Labor Party in the 1930s and 1940s,

the Liberal Party from the 1950s to the 1990s, and the Working Families Party today repeatedly co-opt potential electoral insurgencies into support for mainstream Democratic and sometimes Republican politicians.

The notion of allying independent insurgencies with progressive Democrats lives on today in what is called the inside/outside strategy, a fusion-type strategy for the majority of states with election laws that outlaw fusion. The idea is to support progressive Democrats and run independents against conservative Democrats. In practice, inside/outside strategists find themselves caught between the loyalty demands of compromise candidates and their own hopes for progressive reform. In order to be acceptable partners with the Democrats, they find themselves compelled to support Democrats who stand opposed to their policy demands. Thus Rev. Jesse Jackson and the Rainbow Coalition, which talked about being a "third force" inside and outside the Democratic Party, ended up completely inside the Democratic Party, supporting candidates like Mondale and Dukakis who advocated policies Jackson and the Rainbow Coalition disagreed with.

The newly formed Progressive Democrats of America (PDA) demonstrates how the inside/outside strategy really means bringing progressives now outside the Democratic Party into it. Kevin Spidel, national field director for Kucinich for President and now deputy national director for Progressive Democrats of America has stated that "the most important thing we do is that inside-outside strategy: Pulling together members of the Green Party, the Independent Progressive Politics Network, the hip-hop community, the civil rights community, our allies in congress, the antiwar community. We are bringing together all the social movements within the Democratic Party under one effective tent." [65]

A March 2005 appeal on behalf of Medea Benjamin of Global Exchange called for support of

PDA's unique efforts to ... ultimately take over and transform the Democratic Party ... working both inside and outside the Democratic Party.... PDA is not the Democratic Party. They are a group dedicated to transforming the Democratic Party. PDA represents the truest concerns of the largest number of Democrats. It is the voice of the progressive wing and the conscience of the Democratic Party. PDA has demonstrated great willingness and commitment to work with Greens, Pinks, and other peace and justice activists as it shares in the building of the broad progressive movement. [66]

Popular Front, fusion, inside/outside, and safe states are all species in the same genus of lesser evilism. By relying on the liberal wing of the corporate power structure to defend us from its right wing, the left surrenders its own voice and very identity as an alternative to corporate domination. And history shows, when push comes to shove, that the corporate liberals ally with their conservative counterparts against the people.

The Opportunity Still at Hand

The problems of war, civil liberties, economic justice, and the environment are as much with us after the 2004 election as before. The leadership vacuum for a real opposition to militarism and corporate rule is still there. Whatever its problems and mistakes in 2004, the Green Party is still the major expression of independent progressive politics in the U.S. It is not too late for the Green Party to fill that vacuum.

The Greens in the United States, like Green parties in other countries, have had their strongest base among well-educated people in the service professions, such as teachers, social workers, and the staffs of nonprofit service organizations. The Green parties in other countries built their New Left parties in opposition to the cautious reformism of the traditional Labor, Social Democratic, and Communist parties, as well as the conservative parties. They were reacting to the fact that the Old Left, narrowly focused on bread-and-butter welfare-state reforms, had failed to challenge the system on the issues of militarism, racism, sexism, and ecology. They were also frustrated with the Old Left's near-abandonment of any vision of a new, just, and democratic economic system that moved beyond the exploitation and alienation of capitalism. But the working class in other countries has largely remained attached to the Old Left parties.

The United States has no large labor or socialist party. Without a big party speaking to its needs, the working class is alienated from electoral politics and votes in low numbers. What the Green Party in the United States has the potential to do is unite workers, for whom economic issues are of necessity a leading concern, with the so-called new social movements centered on issues of militarism, ecology, and the liberation of ethnic minorities, women, and gays -- which have been the leading concerns of the progressive middle class that has been the base of Green parties in other countries. Thus the Green Party in the United States has the potential to be far more than a 5-10 percent party like other Green parties representing the new social movements. The Greens here could be both a labor and a new social movement party representing a majority of voters.

The potential for this kind of majoritarian bloc was seen in the Camejo campaigns of 2002 and 2003 for California governor, where people of color and low-income people joined the traditional Green voter strongholds in voting for Camejo at rates two times higher than those of white voters and three times higher than those of affluent voters. [67] Likewise the demographic profile of Nader voters shifted from the traditional progressive white-collar base of Green voters in 2000 toward a more blue-collar and nonwhite voter base in 2004. [68] [69] As Nader often said in his postelection antiwar speaking tour, "Sooner or later, the 47 million workers making less than \$10 an hour are going to be heard from." Given the complete dependence of the two-corporate-party system on corporate funding, no serious economic justice program will be forthcoming from the major parties. The majoritarian potential of the Nader/Camejo voter core is still there.

Petitioners for the Nader/Camejo ticket found this potential throughout the country. When they petitioned in working-class communities, the reception was friendly. Many people said they would still probably vote for Kerry as the lesser evil, but they knew

Nader was on their side and they wanted him as an option on the ballot. It was in the more upscale liberal communities where the traditional Green voter base rubs shoulders with liberal Democrats that petitioners encountered sometimes hostile responses. [70] As discussed above, it is because the professional liberals do receive some material benefits from Democratic administrations that many feel threatened by independent challenges on the left. The future of the Green Party may lie in mobilizing blocs of working-class voters big enough to convince middle-class progressives that their best interests lie with a Green Party now strong enough to win elections.

Election law reforms -- especially fair ballot access laws, proportional representation in legislative bodies, and instant run-off voting for single-seat executive offices -- will be necessary to realize this majoritarian potential of the Green Party. But it is already clear that the majority of people are with the Greens on the immediate demands, not with the bipartisan consensus of the corporate parties. Noam Chomsky laid this out in his post-election analysis. Reviewing recent public opinion polls, he found that large majorities supported cutting the military budget to fund domestic social programs, including national health insurance (80 percent), public schools, and Social Security. On foreign policy, he wrote:

A large majority of the public believe that the U.S. should accept the jurisdiction of the International Criminal Court and the World Court, sign the Kyoto protocols, allow the UN to take the lead in international crises, and rely on diplomatic and economic measures more than military ones in the "war on terror." Similar majorities believe the U.S. should resort to force only if there is "strong evidence that the country is in imminent danger of being attacked," thus rejecting the bipartisan consensus on "pre-emptive war" and adopting a rather conventional interpretation of the UN Charter. A majority even favor giving up the Security Council veto, hence following the UN lead even if it is not the preference of U.S. state managers. [71]

These are Green positions, far to the left of the bipartisan consensus of Democrats and Republicans. Although Chomsky did not critically reflect on his own support for Kerry as the lesser evil in 2004 in his article, the lesson to draw from the public opinion polling he cites is that the Greens should forget what the professional liberals say about spoiling elections for the Democrats, go directly to this majority of the people, and mobilize them around the demands they already support. The task of the Greens is to organize them into an independent party and movement, not deliver them once again to a Democratic Party that stands opposed their demands.

If the history of popular insurgencies against old regimes teaches us anything, it is that they are based on hope, not fear; rising expectations, not a demoralizing resignation to the lesser evil; a positive program for a better world, not business as usual to protect us against something worse. It is time for the Greens to declare their unequivocal independence, democratize their party's internal structures, organize the majority that is already with the Greens on immediate demands, and build a self-

confident Green movement and party that is ready and able to take power and resolve the very solvable social, political, economic, and ecological problems of our society.

Howie Hawkins
January 2006

Re: Independent Politics: The Green Party Strategy Debate

by **admin**

Posted: **Sun Aug 09, 2015 10:50 pm**

Missing Documents and Summary of Contents Not Included

Rachel Odes

Several documents integral to the debate in the Green Party are not included in this collection because their authors refused to grant permission for reprinting. Nonetheless, some of these works fundamentally shaped the discussion represented by the other contributors found in this volume; therefore we include summaries of Ronnie Dugger's "Ralph, Don't Run" and Eric Alterman's "Bush's Useful Idiot," two articles published in The Nation and relating to this public conversation about the role of independent politics for progressives and the direction of the Greens. Both are available on the Web and are cited as footnotes.

Ronnie Dugger: "Ralph, Don't Run" December 2, 2002

The 2000 election fiasco provided occasion for some sober reflection on the political jurisdiction of the Supreme Court and, for some, on the decision to support candidates who chose to position themselves outside the established two-party system. While the blame for George Bush's election was heaped on Ralph Nader and the Green Party even before votes were tallied in Florida, the call for Nader to abstain from an electoral challenge in 2004 did not begin in earnest until 2002, when Ronnie Dugger, the man who nominated Nader at the 1996 and 2000 Green Party conventions, officially warned "Ralph, Don't Run" on the pages of The Nation in December of that year.

As became a familiar refrain to Nader supporters in 2004, Dugger argues, "We cannot afford another division in our ranks that will bring about the election of George W. Bush in 2004." [1] He then goes on to enumerate the ways in which Bush was overseeing the creation of a "crypto-fascist" government that trampled on civil liberties and sought to erect an expanding empire that would stop only when the world was reorganized in its own image. Because of this danger, the entire world depended on the unity of American opposition to Bush's reelection, the implication of course being that Nader should not field another candidacy in 2004.

Dugger goes on to explain his defection from being a leading Nader supporter in both 1996 and 2000 to an advocate of abstention in 2004:

Although I knew that supporting him risked helping elect Republican Presidents in both of those elections, we who supported him and began to forge a third-party politics were acting within our democratic and idealistic

rights, believing that the short-run damage to good causes that we were risking was outweighed ethically by the long-run damage to democracy and social justice that the capture of the Democratic Party by major corporations has caused and, if not stopped, will continue to cause.

Dugger's estimation of the calculated "risks" present in any third-party challenge betrays his rethinking of the Nader campaign strategy, a strategy based on placing blame for short-term and long-term failures squarely on the Democrats who refused to act like the opposition to Republican policies that they are so often rumored to be. He goes on to accept some of the blame for Gore's loss in the election, while acknowledging that the candidate himself refused to risk illuminating the corruption of the electoral system even though it would have brought him to the White House, and chastises Nader for refusing to acknowledge his role as an aid to the Republicans.

Eventually, in recounting a heated conversation with Ralph Nader, Dugger comes to the logical end of his argument about the nature of electoral politics in the United States. As he puts it: "The lamentable truth, but the truth, is that the only vehicle with which the voters can beat Bush for President is the Democratic Party. There is no other." So, despite the history rife with betrayals, failures, and disappointments, Dugger concludes, the year 2004 represents the time when the Republicans will have gone so far to the right that there is no choice but to accept that the Democrats are the sole road of opposition.

Dugger elaborates on his understanding of the current situation and defends his position advocating a campaign for a progressive Democrat in the primaries with this history:

Certainly the [Democratic] party has sold out to corporations, including military contractors. Greens -- indeed most progressives, and Senator John McCain as well -- know and say that both parties have sold the people and the government to the highest bidder. That is what drove so many of us to Nader. But there is more difference between the Republicans and Democrats than Nader concedes. The majority of House Democrats and almost half the Democratic senators rejected Bush's request for blank-check authority to wage war against Iraq. Democrats in the Senate have blocked judicial nominees who would make the federal courts dramatically more right-wing. And Democrats in the House and Senate remain significantly better than the Republicans on the major domestic issues and significantly more committed to protecting civil rights, civil liberties, and abortion rights. That, along with fear of electing Republicans by voting third-party -- not ignorance of the issues, as some of my less thoughtful Green friends suggest -- is why overwhelming majorities of Black and Latino voters, and significant majorities of women, continue to vote Democratic

This does not mean that any of us -- least of all Ralph -- should pronounce

ourselves satisfied with the Democratic Party of 2002. Emphatically to the contrary, the Bush disaster and the corporate scandals provide a historic challenge and a chance to return the Democratic Party to what it should be. Attempting to do this by electing Bush to a second term is an option that is neither rational nor safe. Our job is to resist Bush, not to elect him

The months ahead should be devoted to building nonviolent resistance to Bush's policies and his election. We need to build at once an Internet-based communications network (not an umbrella organization) among progressive, populist, labor, youth, civil rights, women's and religious organizations and individuals. The resistance must take many forms: local protests, sit-ins, teach-ins and, yes, marches on Washington, perhaps even Martin Luther King Jr.'s 1968 idea of a people's encampment in the city, in 2004 -- all the tactics that we know matter in building an opposition force and making that opposition heard. And we may hope that in the midst of the pressures and dynamics of the next year and a half, we will focus a substantial portion of our energies on securing the Democratic nomination for a true progressive.

These grassroots efforts, Dugger argues, are what could help shake the corporate-controlled, corrupted, conservative elements that seemed to have such a firm grip on the helm of Democratic Party politics. Initially, this progressive opposition could orient its demands toward changes in the Democrats' platform, finally giving voice to those who sought an opposition to Bush's tax cuts and aggressive foreign policy. Such activists could then mobilize behind candidates like Dennis Kucinich and Al Sharpton, who stood as marks on the moral compass of a party that had been so severely misdirected.

By 2002 it was time for the left to organize on the basis of unity, repairing the rifts that had been caused by Nader's run in 2000. The steps required for a show of force in 2004, Dugger writes, beginning at the local level -- "taking over the moribund Democratic Party infrastructure" precinct by precinct. With the enthusiasm Nader generated among a new layer of voters and the hope he brought to young people engaging with the electoral process for the first time, Dugger thinks the demands he saw as so critical for the Democrats to represent might just gain a hearing. He concludes:

Each Nader person has to decide for himself or herself which course is better for 2004: supporting Nader again or converging with Democratic progressives in the Democratic primaries. There are no guarantees. Both courses have grave inherent risks. The first runs the high risk of electing Bush; the second, of ending up with yet another corporate puppet as the Democratic nominee. But apart from the Bush policy and practice of aggressive warmaking, the disgrace of the corporate and financial systems since the collapse of Enron provides progressives with their best political opportunity since 1932. We should now launch a two-year drive for the moral

recovery of the Democratic Party and, hence, of the United States. Bush, riding war and the patriotic psychosis he is using our White House to foment, may win whatever we do. But we should not be for Nader knowing that it will help elect Bush. In the emergency that has materialized as if in a nightmare, we may not do that. We no longer have the right.

Eric Alterman: "Bush's Useful Idiot" September 16, 2004

Eric Alterman, a regular columnist for the *The Nation*, was a vocal opponent of Ralph Nader's 2000 presidential run, and was even more vociferous in his opposition to Nader's 2004 bid. Using the facts of the devastation wreaked by the Bush administration on Americans fighting in Iraq, cuts in health care, and environmental destruction, Alterman sums up his take on the political crisis facing the country by proclaiming that "the devastating evidence of Nader's myopia is everywhere around us." [2]

Repeating and escalating pervasive attacks on Nader's character, Alterman compares Nader's goal of growing the Green Party by running for president to George Bush's cynical use of "nation building" as a justification for war on Iraq. He also likens the tarnish on Nader's progressive reputation to the betrayals of former leftists David Horowitz and Christopher Hitchens. Further, Alterman echoes the accusations lobbed at Nader of accepting Republican legal counsel and petitions gathered by politically objectionable forces.

Alterman then summarizes the large-scale defections from the broad political coalition that supported Nader's run in 2000, citing that

among the seventy-four members of the "113-person Nader 2000 Citizens Committee" who've signed a statement urging support for Kerry/Edwards in all swing states this year are: Phil Donahue, Jim Hightower, Susan Sarandon, Noam Chomsky, Barbara Ehrenreich, Howard Zinn, and Cornel West. Indeed, Nader is without a single high-profile supporter anywhere this time around. And he has added to his list of enemies what he terms the "liberal intelligentsia": those he defines as concerned with issues but willing to accept the "least-worst option."

These allies did do substantial damage to Nader's ability to mobilize forces at the grassroots level, and former supporters like Michael Moore with long-term progressive credibility used any public platform available to argue against those who even considered voting for or working to support Nader or the Greens. Alterman continues:

[H]e is actively hated by the leaders of the dispossessed to whom he

professes his allegiance. On June 22, for instance, Nader met with members of the Congressional Black Caucus in a session that ended with shouting, cursing and several members walking out in a state of fury. When it was over, Texas Representative Sheila Jackson Lee told CNN, "This is the most historic election of our lifetime, and it is a life-or-death matter for the vulnerable people we represent. For that reason, we can't sacrifice their vulnerability for the efforts being made by Mr. Nader."

Accusing Nader of operating on the dubious assumption that "things need to get much worse before they could begin to get better," Alterman then goes on to incriminate supporters of Nader's 2000 campaign who were themselves victims of Bush's reactionary judicial appointments -- citing himself as a voice of sanity who knew even then how bad Bush was going to be for American workers like those subject to the politicized decisions of the National Labor Relations Board. Of supporters of Nader's 2004 presidential bid, Alterman asks, "What in God's name will convince [them] to abandon his lemming-like march?" He considers such individuals to be oblivious to atrocities perpetrated by the likes of Bush, Cheney, Ashcroft, and Rumsfeld, since ignorance, Alterman believes, is the only explanation for pursuing Nader's strategy of building a political organization outside the purview of the Democrats.

Alterman's argument ends with an expression of fear for the outcome of an election where Nader proves to be a factor. His poll numbers, on Alterman's writing, were "higher than the 2.74 percent of Americans who provided the votes for his 2000 kamikaze mission -- high enough to tip key states toward the single worst President in American history."

Re: Independent Politics: The Green Party Strategy Debate

by **admin**

Posted: **Sun Aug 09, 2015 11:42 pm**

PART 1 OF 2

CHAPTER ONE

Green Independence? The Debate Begins

Run, Ralph, Run!

By Howie Hawkins

Unpublished letter to The Nation November 14, 2002

Ronnie Dugger's proposal ("Ralph, Don't Run," November 14, 2002) for populists and progressives to enter the Democratic Party is as old as the Populist/Democratic fusion campaign for William Jennings Bryan that killed nineteenth-century populism. Now he wants the Greens to commit suicide by making the same mistake.

The overwhelming majority of Democrats in Congress voted for Bush's tax cuts, his

military buildup, his assaults on civil liberties, and his regulatory and tax favors to corporate interests. But now, according to Dugger, we should rely on these same Democrats to provide the resistance!

Cynthia McKinney, a Democratic Congresswoman who did resist, is what the Democrats do to their progressives these days. When the right (including Georgia's Democratic senator, Zell Miller, and the Democratic Leadership Council) targeted her for defeat, she was abandoned by the state and national Democrats, from Andrew Young and Maynard Jackson to Terry McAuliffe and Bill Clinton.

We can't fight the far right by supporting the moderate right. The left did that in Germany in the 1930 elections, and the moderate right they helped to elect soon handed power over to Hitler.

The Democratic Party has been the graveyard of every progressive insurgency since the Populists died there in 1896. Reforming the Democrats has been the dominant strategy of liberals, progressives, and even most radicals since 1936. Inside the Democratic Party, the left lost its independent voice. Its analyses and policy proposals disappeared from public debate. The left ended up doing the trench work for candidates who were bankrolled by and indentured to the dominant corporate wing of the party.

Dugger's strategy has already been tried and tried -- by the Communist Party and the labor movement since 1936, by the right wing of the Socialist movement led by Michael Harrington, by the mainstream civil rights, women's, peace, and environmental organizations since the 1960s, and by the many liberal presidential contenders like George McGovern, Fred Harris, Ted Kennedy, and Jesse Jackson in the 1970s and 1980s.

As for 2004, by front-loading the primaries to make them virtually a national primary requiring megabucks for a media campaign, the Democratic leadership has all but guaranteed that no Sharpton or Kucinich is going to upset their coronation of a corporate Democrat for the presidential nomination.

Dugger wants to take over the Democratic infrastructure from the precinct level in order to influence the nomination and platform. But he's aiming at an empty shell with little power. The real Democratic infrastructure is the money-raising and media-buying infrastructure.

Duggeristas can win all the precinct chairships they want and it won't mean a thing. When McGovern stole the nomination from the Democrats' corporate wing, they still defeated him by putting their money and media behind Nixon. The winner of the presidential primaries will write the platform, not delegates to the convention. The Democratic precinct infrastructure, such as it is, is for mobilizing votes in general elections, not for primaries or for debating platform planks. Candidates' campaign organizations have largely supplanted mobilization by precinct organizations in most places anyway.

What is there to show for decades of attempts to reform Democratic politics? The left marginalized itself by disappearing into the Democratic Party. And the Democratic

Party has moved steadily to the right as it took the votes on the left for granted. The Democrats have retreated on economic class issues since World War II and on racial justice issues since the 1970s. They never had a serious energy and environmental program and have always supported the militaristic "bipartisan foreign policy" to make the world safe for corporate profiteering.

Every presidential cycle we hear this same refrain: The Republican (Goldwater, Nixon, Reagan, Bush...) is practically a fascist, so we've got to unite behind a Democrat to defeat him. Well, when we did get a Democrat, we got Johnson and Vietnam, then Carter and the initiation of the regressive tax, budget, and deregulatory policies we call Reaganism, and finally Clinton and the completion of Reaganism.

There's a class basis for the bipartisan policy of austerity for workers at home, imperialism abroad, and lip service for the environment. Both major parties are corporate parties. When progressives enter the Democratic Party, they are entering into a coalition with corporate forces who have no interest in empowering workers, retreating from empire, or investing in an ecological transformation of our economy and technology. The best way to fight the right is to build independent political organization and action by the "plain people," as the original Populists put it. It is far easier to build that political party independently than it is to try and take over the Democratic Party. Inside the Democratic Party, activists' energy is spent on the internal struggle and the left's program never reaches the public.

Ralph Nader has a far better chance of winning the presidency in 2004 than Dugger does of realizing his fantasy of persuading the Democrats to "fight for instant-runoff voting" (and open the door wide for the Green Party) in return for the support of Greens in 2004. The Democrats will take votes on their left for granted as always ... unless Ralph runs again.

The point of such a campaign is to try and win the office, not influence the Democrats. What the left needs is a Nader/McKinney ticket heading up Green Party slates for all offices, not another self-defeating attempt to fight the right by supporting the moderate-right Democrats against the far-right Republicans.

Run, Ralph, Run!

Appeal to Ralph Nader

From Green Gubernatorial Candidates December 2002

Dear Ralph,

The Green Party is presented with a crucial opportunity in the 2004 elections. The threat of war, corporate crime, and the continued corrupt domination of money over our electoral system continue to attract people to our party. The 2004 campaign could be exceedingly important in consolidating the Green Party on the national level.

For more than three decades you have been an exemplary civil servant in defense of consumers, civil liberties, civil rights, and democracy. Your willingness to champion the cause of the Green Party by running as its presidential candidate at a time when the party was new and unorganized was an enormous help to the party's growth.

Your willingness to put your long-standing reputation and the great admiration that millions of people throughout the world have for you at the service of this small party shows an exemplary commitment to higher goals at the sacrifice of personal gain or benefits.

Your year 2000 message against corporate crime and abuse and your call for opening the electoral process to new voices have proven correct and are now reluctantly accepted by many who criticized you at the time.

The Green Party is attracting large numbers of youth. It is starting to gain support among people of color. The sharp rise in the Latino vote in California and Iowa for the Green Party is but one sign of what is possible. Women, unionists, and environmentalists who watch their hopes and rights betrayed by the Democratic Party are increasingly joining in protest by voting Green.

As we approach the 2004 presidential campaign, the Green Party faces a critical time. We will need a candidate who can educate for peace, nonviolence, and the rule of law.

Being a diverse party that welcomes controversy, the Green Party will undoubtedly discuss the focus and choice of presidential candidates in a spirited manner.

We, the undersigned, who ran as gubernatorial candidates for the Green Party in 2002, request that you enter the race for the nomination of the Green Party for president in 2004. We know that once again we are asking a huge personal sacrifice from you, but we also know you will be able to bring the Green message to tens of millions of Americans. We believe this time around, the possibility of your inclusion in televised debates will increase and may succeed.

We see one more presidential campaign by you as a major organizing opportunity for the Green Party. It will help the party win elections at the local level, as your candidacy will attract mass media exposure. We believe few people can articulate the need for change and democracy in America as well as you, and certainly no one with the standing you have today in America.

Please give our request your careful consideration.

Sincerely,

Stanley Aronowitz, Candidate for Governor, New York
David Bacon, Candidate for Governor, New Mexico
Peter Camejo, Candidate for Governor, California
Doug Campbell, Candidate for Governor, Michigan
Jonathan Carter, Candidate for Governor, Maine
Nan Garrett, Candidate for Governor, Georgia

Jay Robinson, Candidate for Governor, Iowa
Jill Stein, Candidate for Governor, Massachusetts

The Avocado Declaration

Initiated by Peter Miguel Camejo January 2004

Introduction

The Green Party is at a crossroads. The 2004 elections place before us a clear and unavoidable choice. On one side, we can continue on the path of political independence, building a party of, by, and for the people by running our own campaign for President of the United States. The other choice is the well-trodden path of lesser-evil politics, sacrificing our own voice and independence to support whoever the Democrats nominate in order, we are told, to defeat Bush.

The difference is not over whether to "defeat Bush" -- understanding that to mean the program of corporate globalization and the wars and trampling of the Constitution that come with it -- but rather how to do it. We do not believe it is possible to defeat the "greater" evil by supporting a shamefaced version of the same evil. We believe it is precisely by openly and sharply confronting the two major parties that the policies of the corporate interests these parties represent can be set back and defeated.

Ralph Nader's 2000 presidential campaign exposed a crisis of confidence in the two-party system. His 2.7 million votes marked the first time in modern history that millions voted for a more progressive and independent alternative. Now, after three years of capitulation by the Democratic Party to George Bush they are launching a preemptive strike against a 2004 Ralph Nader campaign or any Green Party challenge. Were the Greens right to run in 2000? Should we do the same in 2004? The Avocado Declaration, based on an analysis of our two-party duopoly and its history, declares we were right and we must run.

Origins of the Present Two-Party System

History shows that the Democrats and Republicans are not two counterpoised forces, but rather complementary halves of a single two-party system: "One animal with two heads that feed from the same trough," as Chicano leader Rodolfo "Corky" Gonzalez explained.

After the Civil War, a peculiar two-party political system has dominated the United States. Prior to the Civil War, a two-party system existed which reflected opposing economic platforms. Since the Civil War, a shift occurred. A two-party system remained in place but no longer had differing economic orientations. Since the Civil War the two parties have shown differences in their image, role, social base, and some policies, but in the last analysis they both support essentially similar economic platforms.

This development can be clearly dated to the split in the Republican Party of 1872

where one wing merged with the "New Departure" Democrats that had already shifted toward the Republican platform, which was pro-finance and industrial business. Prior to the Civil War, the Democratic Party, controlled by the slaveocracy, favored agricultural business interests and developed an alliance with small farmers in conflict with industrial and some commercial interests. That division ended with the Civil War. Both parties supported financial and industrial business as the core of their programmatic outlook.

For over 130 years the two major parties have been extremely effective in preventing the emergence of any mass political formations that could challenge their political monopoly. Most attempts to build political alternatives have been efforts to represent the interests of the average person, the working people. These efforts have been unable to develop. Both major parties have been dominated by moneyed interests and today reflect the historic period of corporate rule.

In this sense United States history has been different from that of any other advanced industrial nation. In all other countries, multiparty systems have appeared, and to one degree or another these countries have more democratic electoral laws and better political representation. In most other countries there exist political parties ostensibly based on or promoting the interest of noncorporate sectors such as working people.

Struggles for Democracy and Social Justice

In spite of this pro-corporate political monopoly, mass struggles for social progress and to expand democracy and civil rights have periodically exploded throughout United States history.

Every major gain in our history, even pre-Civil War struggles -- such as the battles for the Bill of Rights, to end slavery, and to establish free public education -- as well as those after the Civil War, has been the product of direct action by movements independent of the two major parties and in opposition to them.

Since the Civil War, without exception, the Democratic Party has opposed all mass struggles for democracy and social justice. These include the struggle for ballot reform, for the right of African Americans to vote and against American apartheid ("Jim Crow"), for the right to form unions, for the right of women to vote, against the war in Vietnam, the struggle to make lynching illegal, the fight against the death penalty, the struggle for universal health care, the fight for gay and lesbian rights, and endless others. Many of these struggles were initiated by or helped by the existence of small third parties.

Division of Work

When social justice, peace, or civil rights movements become massive in scale, and threaten to become uncontrollable and begin to win over large numbers of people, the Democratic Party begins to shift and presents itself as a supposed ally. Its goal is always to coopt the movement, demobilize its forces and block its development into an alternative, independent political force.

The Republican Party has historically acted as the open advocate for a platform which benefits the rule of wealth and corporate domination. They argue ideologically for policies benefiting the corporate rulers. The Republicans seek to convince the middle classes and labor to support the rule of the wealthy with the argument that "what's good for General Motors is good for the country," that what benefits corporations is also going to benefit regular people.

The Democratic Party is different. They act as a "broker," negotiating and selling influence among broad layers of the people to support the objectives of corporate rule. The Democratic Party's core group of elected officials is rooted in careerists seeking self-promotion by offering to the corporate rulers their ability to control and deliver mass support. And to the people they offer some concessions, modifications on the platform of the Republican Party. One important value of the Democratic Party to the corporate world is that it makes the Republican Party possible through the maintenance of the stability that is essential for "business as usual." It does this by preventing a genuine mass opposition from developing. Together the two parties offer one of the best frameworks possible with which to rule a people that otherwise would begin to move society toward the rule of the people (i.e., democracy).

An example of this process is our minimum-wage laws. Adjusted for inflation, the minimum wage has been gradually declining for years. Every now and then the Democrats pass a small upward adjustment that allows the downward trend to continue but gives the appearance that they are on the side of the poor.

Manipulated Elections

Together the two parties have made ballot access increasingly difficult, defended indirect elections such as the electoral college, insisted on winner-take-all voting to block the appearance of alternative voices, and opposed proportional representation to prevent the development of a representative democracy and the flowering of choices. Both parties support the undemocratic structure of the U.S. Senate and the electoral college, which are not based on one person, one vote, but instead favor the more conservative regions of the nation.

Elections are based primarily on money. By gerrymandering and accumulating huge war chests -- payoffs for doing favors for their rich "friends" -- most officeholders face no real challenge at the ballot box and are reelected. In the races that are "competitive," repeatedly the contests are reduced to two individuals seeking corporate financial backing. Whoever wins the battle for money wins the election. Districts are gerrymandered into "safe" districts for one or the other party. Gerrymandering lowers the public's interest and involvement while maintaining the fiction of "democracy" and "free elections." The news media go along with this, typically focusing on the presidential election and a handful of other races, denying most challengers the opportunity to get their message out to the public.

Corporate backing shifts between the two parties depending on short-term, even accidental, factors. In the 1990s, more endorsements from CEOs went to the Democrats. At present the money has shifted to the Republican Party. Most corporations donate to both parties to maintain their system in place.

No Choice, No Hope

The Democratic Party preaches defeatism to the most oppressed and exploited. Nothing can be expected, nothing is possible but what exists. To the people they justify continuous betrayal of the possibility for real change with the argument of lesser evil. It's the Republicans or us. Nothing else is possible.

Democracy Versus Cooptation

Democracy remains a great danger to those who have privilege and control. When you are part of the top 1 percent of the population that has as much income as the bottom 75 percent of the people, democracy is a permanent threat to your interests. The potential power of the people is so great that it puts sharp limits on what corporations can do. The ability of the Democratic Party to contain, co-opt, and demobilize independent movements of the people is a critical element in allowing the continued destruction of our planet; abuse, discrimination, and exploitation based on race, gender, sexual preference, and class; and the immense misdistribution of wealth.

As we enter the twenty-first century there is no more important issue than saving our planet from destruction. The world economy is becoming increasingly globalized. Corporate power is now global in nature and leads to massive dislocations and suffering for most people. The planet is overpopulated and the basis of human life declining. The greatest suffering and dislocations exist in the third world, but there is also a downward trend in the United States as globalization leads to a polarization of income and wealth. This shift is making the United States each day closer to a third-world country, with an extremely wealthy minority and a growing underclass. This polarization adds further fear of democracy for the elite.

The Growing Shift Against the Rule of Law

The shift away from the rule of law has accelerated in recent years. This process will be a factor in the 2004 presidential elections, especially if a Green candidate is involved in the race. The shift away from our Constitution is proceeding with the complicity of both parties and the courts. The changes are made illegally through legislation rather than the official process by which the Constitution can be amended because to do otherwise would awaken a massive resistance. A similar process is under way regarding the rule of law internationally.

The reason given for these steps since September 2001 is the terrorist attack within the borders of the United States -- an attack made by forces originally trained, armed, and supported by the United States government. The so-called "war on terrorism" does not exist. The United States government has promoted, tolerated, and been party to the use of terrorism all over the world. The United States has even been found guilty of terrorism by the World Court.

The terrorist attacks against U.S. targets are important, but they need to be countered primarily in a social and political manner -- a manner which is the opposite of that taken by the USA PATRIOT Act and the occupations of Afghanistan and Iraq. On the

contrary, by aggravating inequality and injustice, disrespecting the rule of law and its military interventions and occupations, the present policies of the U.S. government add to the dangers faced by U.S. citizens throughout the world and in the United States. Especially dangerous are the promotion of nuclear, chemical, and bacteriological weapons and the open declarations of the intention to once again use nuclear weapons.

This recent shift, while rooted in bipartisan policies over the last decades, has been accelerated by the present Republican administration. Its ability to carry out these actions has depended on the Democratic Party's support and its ability to contain, disorient, and prevent the development of mass opposition.

Amazingly, in December of 2003 General Tommy Franks, the recently retired head of U.S. Central Command, was quoted as stating that he thought the people of the United States may prefer a military government over our present Constitutional republican form if another terrorist attack occurs. Such a statement is so far off base one must wonder why it is being made. The people of the United States are solidly opposed to any consideration of a military dictatorship in the United States. In fact, polls have repeatedly shown they favor increasing our democratic rights such as limiting campaign contributions and allowing more points of view in debates.

Never in our history have top military leaders or ex-military leaders spoken openly of ending our Constitutional form of government. No leader of the Democratic Party has protested Franks's comments. How many officers in the armed forces have such opinions? If there are any they should be immediately removed from the military.

Democrats: Patriot Act and Unequivocal Support for Bush

The Democratic Party leadership voted for the USA PATRIOT Act. In the United States Senate only one Democrat voted against the Patriot Act. Democrats considered "liberal" such as Paul Wellstone and Barbara Boxer voted for the USA PATRIOT Act. Huge majorities have repeatedly passed votes in the Congress against the United States Constitution. In one case only one Congresswoman, Barbara Lee, voted against the abrogation of the Constitution's separation of powers as stated in Article 1, Section 8. Democratic Party politicians, when called upon to support the Republican Party and their corporate backers, repeatedly comply and vote against the interest of the people and against the Constitution they have sworn to uphold.

The Democratic Party leadership as a whole gave repeated standing ovations to George Bush as he outlined his platform in his January 2002 State of the Union address, a speech that promoted the arbitrary decision to occupy sovereign nations through military aggression in violation of international law. The ovations given the Republican platform by the Democratic Party were done on national television for the people to see a unified political force. The effect is to make people who believe in peace and support the U.N. charter, the World Court, and the rule of law feel they are isolated, powerless, and irrelevant.

A resolution was passed in March of 2003 calling for "unequivocal support" for George Bush for the war in Iraq. It had the full support of the Democratic Party leadership.

Even Democratic "doves" like Dennis Kucinich would not vote against the resolution. Only a handful of congressional representatives (eleven) voted against the motion to give "unequivocal support" to George Bush.

The Role of the Democratic Party

The Democratic Party with its open defense of the Republican platform and its attacks on our Constitution and the rule of law internationally would be of little value to those who favor the present policies if it allowed the development of a mass independent opposition. The failure of such forces to exist in sufficient strength permits the Democrats to be more open in their support for antidemocratic policies.

Nevertheless some voices outside the Democratic and Republican parties are beginning to be heard. Massive antiwar street demonstrations, and the voice of a new small party, the Green Party, have gained some attention and respect. In no case did the Democratic Party as an institution support, call for, or help mobilize popular forces for peace and respecting international law. Yet large numbers of its rank and file and many lower-level elected officials against their party participated and promoted antiwar protests.

Many lower elected officials among the Democrats and even some Republicans who defend the Constitution of the United States are voting to oppose the USA PATRIOT Act at the local level. Even many middle-level Democrats have conflicting views and sometimes take progressive stances in concert with the Green Party's platform. These individuals live in a contradiction with the party they belong to. While we can and should join with them behind specific issues, we do not adopt their error of belonging to a party that is against the interest of the people -- that is, pro-corporate -- and against the rule of law.

Democrats Attack the Green Party

The Democratic Party allows its lower-level representatives to present themselves as opposed to the war. Some of its leaders have begun to take on an appearance of disagreeing with "how" the policies of Bush are being implemented. The Democratic Party has unleashed a campaign to divide and conquer those opposed to the pro-war policies. On one hand it tries to appear sympathetic to antiwar sentiment, while on the other it tries to silence voices opposed to Bush's policies.

Soon after the 2000 presidential election, the Democrats began an attack on the Green Party on the grounds that since there is no runoff system, that is, since the Democrats in partnership with the Republicans do not allow free elections, the Green Party's existence and its candidate for president, Ralph Nader in 2000, should be declared responsible for George Bush becoming president.

Progressive Democrats Join the Attack

This campaign against the Greens has been heavily promoted by the corporate media. It has achieved success in part because of the support it has received by the more liberal wing of the Democratic Party and some of the "progressive" journals controlled

by liberal Democrats, such as The Nation and Mother Jones.

Their political message is simple and clear: "No voice truly critical of the platform of the Republicans may be permitted; only the Democrats must appear as 'opponents' to the Republicans." They have no objection to rightist, pro-war third-party candidates entering the race and promoting their views. They only oppose a voice for peace and the rule of law like that of Ralph Nader in 2000.

Never in the history of the United States has a magazine claiming to favor democracy run a front-page article calling on an individual not to run for president -- until The Nation did so against Ralph Nader running for president in 2004. The fact that polls show 23 percent of the people favor Nader running (extrapolated to the total voting population this would represent about 40 million people) and 65 percent favored his inclusion in debates is of no concern to The Nation as it seeks to silence the only candidate who in 2000 opposed the premises of George Bush's platform.

The Conspiracy Against the Voters

The Nation's editorial board is free to campaign for the Democratic Party and urge people to vote for the Democrats in spite of their support for the USA PATRIOT Act, their votes for unequivocal support to George Bush, etc. That is their right. But they want something else. They want the Greens to join with them in a conspiracy to deny the voters a choice.

All voters are fully aware there is no runoff in a presidential race. Many who support the platform of the Greens will vote against their own principles by voting for the Democratic Party. Each voter will make that decision. But The Nation, along with many others, is calling on the Greens to disenfranchise voters who disagree with The Nation's preference for the Democratic Party. It wants these voters to have no choice and be unable to express their electoral wish. The Nation and those it represents want to silence the voices of these voters, not to allow it to be registered, as a way to try and force them to vote for their party, the Democrats.

The passage of the USA PATRIOT Act, the undemocratic electoral laws, the manipulation of electoral campaigns by the corporate media, and the campaign to silence the Greens are all part of the same campaign against democracy. They are just another example of how the two-party system is set up to repress and silence those who favor democracy.

Lesser Evil Leads to Greater Evil

The effectiveness of the "lesser-evil" campaign has penetrated within the Green Party, where a minority supports the concept that the Green Party should not run in 2004. Behind this view is the concept that politics can be measured in degrees, like temperature, and that the Democrats offer a milder and thus less-evil alternative to the Republican platform. This view argues that to support the "lesser evil" weakens the greater evil.

Such a view fails to grasp the essence of the matter. Political dynamics work in exactly

the opposite way. To silence the voice of the Green Party and support the Democrats strengthens George Bush and the Republican Party because only the appearance of forces opposed to the present policies, forces that are clearly independent of corporate domination, can begin to shift the relationship of forces and the center of political debate. Despite the intention of some of its promoters, the anti-Green Party campaign helps the policies pursued by Bush as well as his reelection possibilities.

Although some claim that George Bush's policies represent only a small coterie of neoconservative extremists, the reality is otherwise. Bush and his friends serve at the will of the corporate rulers. His standing with the American people can be crushed in a moment if the corporate rulers so choose -- just by the power of their media, which today is concentrated in the hands of a half dozen giant conglomerates.

It is in the interests of the corporate effort toward a new colonialism to have Bush reelected in 2004, thereby legitimatizing his government before the world. In order to safely achieve that, the voices that truly oppose Bush's policies need to be silenced.

Opposition Is Rising

Opposition is rising against Bush. The massive overwhelming majority of the world is against Bush's war policies. The resistance to the occupation in Iraq and Afghanistan, and the inability of the U.S. media and government to prevent the world from hearing the truth about these events, is weakening Bush's standing. The corporate interests and their media apparently want to make a great effort to get Bush elected, but if this becomes too difficult, the Democratic Party will be prepared to appear as an "opposition" that will continue the essence of Bush's policy with new justifications, modifications, and adjusted forms.

The only force that could upset the general direction of the bipartisan policies put in place over the last few years would be a destabilizing mass development inside the United States, along with world public opinion. This occurred during the war in Vietnam and forced a reversal of U.S. policy.

In the case of Vietnam, the Republicans under Eisenhower initiated the direct U.S. intervention by sponsoring the Diem regime in the south of Vietnam when the French withdrew in the mid-1950s. With U.S. encouragement, his regime refused to abide by the peace accords and hold talks and elections to reunify the country. The Democrats under Kennedy sent ground troops in the early sixties. The U.S. force expanded massively from 16,300 under Kennedy to more than half a million by 1967 under Lyndon Baines Johnson, Kennedy's vice president, who won reelection in 1964 as the supposed "peace" candidate.

The rise of a massive uncontrollable opposition within the United States and around the world became a critical brake on the pro-war policies. An entire generation was starting to deeply question the direction of the United States in world affairs. The Democrats and Republicans, reflecting the opinion of the major corporate leaders and strategists, decided they had no choice but to pull back and concede military defeat in Vietnam because the developing division in U.S. society threatened to result in the emergence of a massive independent political force. This change in policy was carried

out under Republican Richard Nixon.

Saving Bush from a backlash is now on the agenda, and the positions of the Democratic Party help Bush in several ways.

First, they seek to prevent even a small but independent critical political development, that is, they try to silence the Green Party, and they orient those opposed to the new colonialism to stop demonstrating and focus instead on the electoral campaigns of their party.

Second, they seek to convince the people that what was wrong with the invasion of Iraq was just that the United Nations -- meaning the undemocratic Security Council dominated by the wealthiest countries -- did not lend it political cover, or that NATO was not the military form used, or that the U.S. did not include France and Germany in stealing Iraq's resources, or that not enough troops are being used or some other question about how things are being done rather than what is being done.

They promise that all will be well if the Democrats can take charge and handle the matter better. With this orientation the Democrats free the hands of corporate America to give their funding and support to Bush. With the exception of a relatively few isolated voices, they offer not real opposition, but only nuances.

And those isolated voices of opposition within the Democratic Party (Kucinich, Rev. Al Sharpton and Carol Moseley-Braun), no matter how well intentioned, have a negative consequence: they give legitimacy to the Democrats as the "opponents" of the Republicans.

These exceptions to the general rule are allowed on condition that after the primary campaigns these individuals will urge a vote for the Democratic nominee. This must be done no matter how different that nominated candidate's positions are from the positions taken during the primary campaign. The cover for their political sellout is the winner-take-all system that allows them to posture as just "opposed to Bush" as they support the very party that has supported Bush.

Those are the dues you have to pay to "play" in that game; otherwise you will be eliminated and driven out of the House, the Senate, or a governor's office.

For the Green Party there is nothing more important or effective, long-term and short-term, in the efforts to stop Bush than to expose how the corporate interests use their two-party system and the role of the Democrats in that system. We must let all Americans who question the policies of Bush, who favor the rule of law, peace, and our Constitution and Bill of Rights see the Democratic Party's hypocrisy, how they support the war and the USA PATRIOT Act.

Democrats Help Institutionalize Bush's Platform

It is transparent that the Democrats' objective is to help institutionalize the USA PATRIOT Act and its break with our Constitution and Bill of Rights. They do this by proposing amendments and adjustments to the law that will disorient, divide, and

weaken the opposition to the USA PATRIOT Act, and give the appearance that public concerns have been addressed.

The Democrats are making interesting suggestions for how to pursue the war effort. Some are calling for a more extensive commitment and the sending of more troops to suppress any resistance to U.S. domination in Iraq and Afghanistan. Others are suggesting more flexibility in forming alliances with European nations that had made capital investments to exploit Iraq's oil wealth under the Saddam Hussein dictatorship. These proposals are all aimed at continuing the denial of self-determination for the people of Iraq, which means continuing war and continuing violation of international law.

The Democrats and Republicans both supported Saddam Hussein and the Baathists in Iraq before 1990 when it served their interests. Now they argue with each other over how best to oppress the Iraqis as they try to fool the American people into thinking they are actually trying to bring the Iraqis democracy and freedom.

Self-Correcting Mechanism

The role of these two parties is not a conspiracy. Boxer, Wellstone, and many other Democrats did not vote for the USA PATRIOT Act consciously seeking to assist Bush. Being Democrats, they became part of a system that will have them removed if they do not follow the rules of support when corporate America insists. To rise in the Democratic Party there is a process that results in compliant people unable to question, who remain silent before betrayals or criminal acts. Cynthia McKinney is an example of a Democrat who refused to go along, stepped across the line within the Democratic Party, and was driven out of office by the combined efforts of both the Democratic and Republican parties and the corporate media.

The Fourth Amendment to the Constitution prohibits searches without probable cause and a judge's order. Voting for a law that abrogates this amendment, as the USA PATRIOT Act does directly, is an illegal act. The Democrats and Republicans who voted for this law were fully aware of what they were doing. It is an insult to the intelligence of people like Wellstone and Boxer to say that they didn't fully understand the choice they were making. The Green Party differs; it defends the Fourth Amendment and seeks to defend the Constitution and respect for the law which provides the only method by which the Constitution can be amended, requiring the consideration and vote of the states.

It should be said that there are many issues where Greens agree with Democrats like Boxer and Wellstone, and even admire positions they have taken and efforts they have made. But to go into denial and refuse to recognize the obvious -- that the Democrats have joined in passing and promoting the USA PATRIOT Act against the Constitution with the support of people like Boxer -- is to deny the true framework we face politically in our nation.

The self-purging process of the Democratic Party is an ongoing balance between allowing, even welcoming, voices of opposition in order to co-opt them and not allowing those voices to form a serious challenge, especially any challenge that favors the development of political formations not dominated by corporate money.

Success of the Democratic Party

The Democratic Party should be seen historically as the most successful political party in the history of the world in terms of maintaining stability for rule by the privileged few. There is no other example that comes near what the Democratic Party has achieved in maintaining the domination of money over people.

Through trickery, the Democratic Party co-opted the powerful and massive rise of the Populist movement at the end of the nineteenth century using precisely the same lesser-evil arguments now presented against the Green Party.

They blocked the formation of a mass Labor Party when the union movement rose in the 1930s. They derailed, co-opted, and dismantled the powerful civil rights movement, anti-Vietnam War movement, and women's liberation movement. They have even succeeded in establishing popular myths that they were once for labor, for civil rights, and for peace. Nothing could be further from the truth.

One quite popular myth is that Franklin Delano Roosevelt was pro-labor. Continuing the policies of Woodrow Wilson who oversaw a reign of anti-union terror, including blacklisting and deporting immigrant labor organizers, FDR's administration sabotaged union drives every step of the way. When workers overcame their bosses' resistance and began winning strikes, FDR turned on them and gave the green light for repression after police killed ten striking steel workers in 1937. As FDR said himself, "I'm the best friend the profit system ever had." After WWII Truman used the new Taft-Hartley Anti-Labor Act to break national strikes more than a dozen times.

The Democrats have not abandoned "progressive" positions they once held, as some Democrats repeatedly claim, but have simply shifted further to the right as world globalization has advanced, leading to the lowering of democratic rights and the growth of wealth polarization within the United States.

If a massive opposition develops, if the Greens begin to win races and their following grows, the corporations will put more money behind the Democrats, the media will become more sympathetic to the Democrats, promote their more "progressive" voices. The media would also become more critical of the Republican lack of sensitivity, all in an effort to maintain the two-party system. That is, a shift toward the Democrats will occur if the Democrats cannot control the people.

The two-party system is a self-correcting mechanism that shifts back and forth between the two parties, and within different wings of those parties, to maintain corporate political control. Loyalty to the two-party system is inculcated in the educational system, and our electoral laws are rigged to discriminate against third parties.

Green Voice Must Be Heard

Those who call for a "lesser evil," which is still a call for evil, will unfortunately succeed. The call for a "lesser evil" is what makes possible the greater evil. Those voices who say

Ralph Nader should not run, that the Greens should consider withdrawing, that the Greens should not campaign in states where the vote is close are unconsciously helping Bush's reelection by weakening the development of an opposition political movement which could shift the balance of forces. Nothing is more important than the appearance of candidates and mass actions that tell the full truth, that call for the rule of law and respect for the Bill of Rights, and speak out for peace and social justice.

There is nothing more threatening to the rule of the corporations than the consolidation of a party of hundreds of thousands of citizens, especially young people, that fearlessly tell the truth to the American people. Only such a movement can in time become millions, then tens of millions and eventually win. But it is also the best strategy for the short term, to force a shift away from the direction being pursued today.

Short Term Versus Long Term

The idea that there is a conflict between the short term and the long term is a cover for capitulation. It has been the endless argument of the Democrats against challenges to their policies. When independent movements appear, the Democrats call on people to enter the Democratic Party and work from within. There is no time to go outside the two-party framework, they argue. This argument was made a hundred years ago, fifty years ago, twenty-five years ago, and of course remains with us today. Millions have agreed there's no time to do the right thing. Very powerful groups, like the AFL-CIO, have followed this advice. As a result, the number of workers in unions has dropped from 37 percent of the workforce to 12 percent as they politically subordinated themselves to the pro-corporate Democratic Party.

Rather than success, these movements have found the Democratic Party to be the burial ground for mass movements and of third-party efforts that sought to defend the interests of the people throughout American history.

If we follow the advice of the "left" Democrats who call on Greens to return to the Democratic Party, the Green Party will collapse like the New Party did for fear of confronting the Democrats.

The exact opposite is needed. We need to encourage those Democrats who are opposing the policies of their party to follow the lead of Congressman Dan Hamburg and break with the Democrats and join with us in developing an alternative force, fighting for democracy, social justice, and peace.

All people who believe in democracy need to call on The Nation and others to stop their campaign against the Greens, a campaign at the service of corporate America. Instead they should join with the Greens in a battle for democracy in the same manner in which many progressive Democrats in San Francisco rejected their party's nomination for mayor and joined with the Greens to create a progressive alternative. We need to suggest to "progressive" Democrats that they should concentrate their attacks on the leadership of their party and its support for George Bush's policies, and not on the Greens for telling the truth and actually fighting for the ideals many of these Democrats claim to hold.

The Year 2004

The year 2004 is a critical year for the Greens. The campaign of the Democrats will be powerful and to some extent effective. Some will abandon us, but others will be attracted by our courage and our principled stance. In California, the Green registration continues to rise even as the campaign against the Green Party grows. We may very well receive a lower vote than in 2000. But if we do not stand up to this pressure and hold our banner high, fight them, and defend our right to exist, to have our voice heard, to run candidates that expose the two-party system and the hypocrisy of the Democratic Party and its complicity with the Republicans, we will suffer the greatest loss of all.

The Green Party

The Green Party can and will win the hearts and minds of people when they see us as reliable and unshakable, if we stand our ground. In time this leads to respect and then support. Those Greens who agree with the Ten Key Values but have disagreements with this Avocado Declaration need to be respected. We need to allow an open and honest debate as an essential part of our culture.

Truth can only be ascertained through the conflict of ideas. Thus democracy is essential for society but also for our internal process. The present discussion around the 2004 elections is one that will not end but will be with us for a long time. It finds expression in many forms because it is the most fundamental issue of American politics in our epoch. Are we willing to stand up to the rule of corporate domination and its central political agent that has deceived and betrayed our people, the Democratic Party?

The Green Party Must Be a Pluralistic Organization

The Green Party seeks to bring all those who agree with its Ten Key Values into one unified political party. It welcomes diversity, debate, and discussion on issues of strategy, tactics, and methods of functioning. By its nature, a healthy organization that fights for the interests of the people will always have internal conflicts, sharp differences, personality difficulties, and all other things human. This is not only normal, it is healthy.

The Greens do not consider themselves a substitute for other movements or organizations, such as peace organizations and other specific issue groups that seek to unite people of all political persuasions around a specific platform. We welcome diversity with other groups that seek to move in the same direction with us but are not agreed to join us. We will try to work with such organizations where common ground exists. Thus the Avocado Declaration includes a call for the Greens to accept diversity and maintain unity as we seek to build an effective mass organization.

Let those that agree with the Avocado Declaration help protect and build the Green Party as a vehicle for democracy, freedom, liberty, and justice for all.

Re: Independent Politics: The Green Party Strategy Debate

by **admin**Posted: **Sun Aug 09, 2015 11:43 pm**

PART 2 OF 2

The Green Party and the 2004 Elections: A Three-Dimensional Plan

By John Rensenbrink and Tom Sevigny Green Horizon Quarterly, May 1, 2003

This message is an attempt to bring together in a single vision various ideas, points of view, and practical recommendations that have been made by many different people in the rapidly intensifying debate over what the Green Party of the United States should do in the 2004 national elections.

We think everyone would agree that it would be foolish to enter the national races, especially the one for president and vice president, without strategically weighing all the options. We cannot afford to have a knee-jerk reaction and blindly enter any race, certainly not the one for president in this fateful time.

After making two observations about the evolving situation facing the Green Party, we present a "Three-Dimensional Plan." It will enable the Green Party to avoid grave dangers, build our party, and move forward with confidence, strength, and unity.

We take pains to point out that we propose this not in our capacity as holders of official positions within the national Green Party (Tom as a cochair of the Steering Committee and John as member of the Presidential Exploratory Committee). We propose this plan simply as concerned members of the Green Party.

Setting the Context: Some Observations Regarding the Situation

Two things especially rivet one's attention as we look toward the 2004 elections.

First, the prospect of a Green Party run for the presidency is producing a gathering storm of debate within and without the party, peppered with near-panic declarations, threatening to engulf the party in fractious internal contestation. One longtime and savvy leader of the Greens describes the situation as "a dark and scary tunnel." But outside the party this debate is also rising to a flood of concern, advice, and anguished pronouncements -- not only from Democrats or from those erstwhile Republicans who detest Bush, but especially from the peace and environmental movements. Great fear is expressed that the Green candidate for president will prevent the defeat of George Bush and his despised cronies. One commentator online entitles his article "Bush Presents Colossal Dilemma for Greens in 2004" (Earl O. Hutchinson).

One can't help smiling a little -- it's as if "the movements" have finally discovered the Green Party! However, we believe they make a solid point -- and that in any case they reflect the feelings and considered opinions of millions of voters. The Green Party

cannot and must not just shrug our shoulders and pretend this outpouring does not exist or is simply misguided. We could self-destruct if we did that. Second, a widespread belief has taken hold among many sections of the electorate that the Green Party's campaign for the presidency in 2000 either caused, or in any case paved the way for, Bush's becoming president.

Quite aside from the virulence of the attack on the Green Party and our candidate Ralph Nader (and from some quarters it was and is very, very nasty), there exists a strong residue of opinion among millions of voters that Ralph and the Greens spoiled Gore's bid for the presidency.

Whether or not they are right about this (we don't believe they are), and quite aside from whether or not they are right that Gore would not have been as bad as Bush, their opinion has settled into a solid view.

The Green Party can dismiss this -- and we have read countless e-mails, preaching to the choir, detailing that this view is mistaken and wrong. But that will not make it go away. The point is, it will not go away. We must face this. We must find a positive and creative way forward.

In fact, let's find a way to use these negatives to our advantage.

With this in mind, we urge the following "Three-Dimensional Plan" for 2004.

A Three-Dimensional Plan for 2004

The plan has three fully integrated components. Together they offer a winning strategy for 2004.

The three components are:

First, the Green Party runs 4-6 candidates for Congress (House of Representatives) in 2004 in carefully selected districts, fully focusing the energies and resources of the party to get them elected.

Second, the Green Party runs homegrown Greens for president and vice president in a vigorous campaign that includes, at the beginning, the stated intention to be ready to (a) give their support to the Democratic ticket late in the campaign if the race between the R and D candidates is very close; or (b) if the race between the D and the R candidates is very close, to concentrate only in states where the outcome between the D and the R candidates is not in doubt.

Third, the Green Party invites nationally known figures, especially Ralph Nader and Cynthia McKinney, to throw the weight of their presence and resources in support of the congressional candidates and the homegrown Green candidates for president and vice president. This third component could include a campaign for the U.S. Senate in Connecticut by Ralph Nader.

What This Plan Accomplishes

1. It transcends the spoiler argument and "spoiler effect" altogether and removes it from the campaign.
2. It opens the door for the Green message to be heard on its merits.
3. It grooms national candidates for 2006 and 2008 -- both the homegrown candidates for president and vice president and the congressional candidates. It gives them experience and national exposure.
4. It enables the Green Party to "run against Congress" -- doing what Harry Truman did so effectively in 1948 when he ran, and won, on the slogan of the "do-nothing Congress." This has enormous potential for us -- it could even result in having a Green in Congress as we begin the year 2005. Maybe more than one! We can all join in on this -- Ralph and Cynthia, our presidential and vice presidential candidates, all the tendencies and wings within the party -- as well as many celebrities who would be able to support us enthusiastically, whereas now they are hesitant, given the rising pressure to defeat Bush at all costs. We could go a long way with this and find it very exciting and satisfying to boot. Congress has been an enormous failure in the past two years and deserves to be run against. We think most voters agree and would give our campaign a big hearing.
5. By running against Congress, we can make our case against the Democrats even stronger. We can use their blank check for war, their support of the Patriot Act, etc., in a much more effective way than we could by putting our big efforts into running a high-profile presidential candidate as we did last time. The Democrats in Congress could have stopped Bush; they decided to go along with him. We are free to make that point, again and again, effectively.
6. It unifies the party, transcending what could otherwise become a very bitter debate and harmful infighting within our party.
7. The plan enables us to change from what would otherwise be a defensive posture in the campaign, always having to expend energy and time reliving and explaining the past, to a positive and forward-looking posture.
8. It helps our party grow, whereas the present prospect is of a party saddled with baggage from the past, divided within itself, uncertain about its future, and on the outs with millions of voters who could otherwise be on our side. With this plan, we surmount the negatives, surprise our critics, and take a new leap forward.

For a Green Presidential Campaign in 2004

By Howie Hawkins Presentation at Regional Green Meeting, June 28, 2003

Progressives are running scared today. They are scared of Bush and are demanding that the Greens not run a candidate and back a Democrat, or that the Greens

backhandedly support the Democrat by not campaigning in the swing states.

To be sure, Bush is scary. Constitutional rights restricted. Unilateral presidential war powers. War budget hiked. International treaties abrogated. Tax cuts for the rich. Worker safety and environmental regulations gutted. Pandering to corporate interests in the midst of a corporate crime wave. An anti-consumer bankruptcy bill. Invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq, with threats of future invasions or proxy wars for regime change in Iran, Syria, Saudi Arabia, North Korea, Venezuela, Cuba, and who knows where else.

But the Democrats are scary, too. The majority of congressional Democrats have let Bush have his way on every one of these issues.

If the Democratic Party won't resist Bush's policies in Congress, why should progressives support them for the presidency?

The Democrats didn't even resist Bush when he stole the Florida vote in 2000. We now know that Gore won Florida handily from the recount done by the media consortium that included the Wall Street Journal, New York Times, and Los Angeles Times. But the Democrats, far more interested in preserving the system's legitimacy than fighting its racism, refused to make an issue of how the Republicans cut Blacks from the voter rolls through computerized racial profiling.

The Congressional Black Caucus gave the Democrats a second chance after the Supreme Court selection of Bush, when it appealed to Senate Democrats to object to accepting the Florida electors. The objection of just one Democratic senator would have forced an investigation of the racial voter profiling and a recount of the Florida vote. But not one of them -- not Wellstone, not Kennedy, not Feingold, not Boxer, not Clinton, not Kerry -- not one of the Democratic liberals objected.

And the Greens are supposed to stand down and leave it to the Democrats to fight Bush?

Yes, a Democrat might beat Bush. But no Democrat is going to beat Bushism.

Just as electing Clinton did not beat Reaganism, but took Reaganism far beyond what Reagan and Bush Sr. could accomplish, so electing a Democrat will not defeat Bushism to change the basic foreign and domestic policies of the U.S.

What was called Reaganism (to scare us into voting Democratic) was really a bipartisan consensus around neoconservative militarism and neoliberal economics. That bipartisan consensus was initiated under Carter, supported by the majority of congressional Democrats during the Reagan and Bush Sr. administrations, carried far beyond what Reagan and Bush Sr. could do by Clinton, and is now being taken even further by Bush, again with the support of the majority of congressional Democrats.

These policies were initiated under Carter, who increased the military budget beyond Ford's projections and got the U.S. into covert military operations in Afghanistan with the hope, successful as it turned out, that it would provoke the Soviets to invade. The U.S. began in 1978 training the Islamic fundamentalists who we now know as Al

Qaeda. Bush's military occupation of Afghanistan and Iraq is the Carter Doctrine in practice, which stated in essence that the U.S. would go to war for oil in the Middle East.

Neoconservative militarism is the post-Vietnam foreign policy of the corporate rulers as they reasserted their post-World War II policy of dominating the capitalist world. With the fall of the Soviet bloc, Bush Sr. declared a New World Order in which the U.S. would dominate the whole world and make it safe for capitalist exploitation. The Clinton administration continued this policy through NATO expansion and its intervention in the Balkans without UN authorization, as well as the complex of trade and credit policies administered by the IMF, World Bank, WTO, and numerous corporate-managed trade agreements on the model of NAFTA.

Both parties are just as committed to economic policies of neoliberal austerity. Again, these policies were initiated under Carter, who slashed social programs to increase the military budget and reassert U.S. interventionism with the development of the Rapid Deployment Force, adopted monetarism as fiscal policy with the appointment of Volker to the Fed, and began the attack on organized labor by refusing to support the common situs picketing law he had pledged the AFL-CIO he would support.

Neoliberal austerity became the post-Keynesian economic policy of the corporate rulers as they ran into the internal limits to profits and growth under the Keynesian welfare/warfare state.

The new ruling-class consensus is the austerity/warfare state of neoliberal economics and neoconservative empire.

And that ruling-class consensus is the pro-war, pro-corporate bipartisan consensus.

What is now called Bushism is not a radical departure but a continuation of this bipartisan consensus, with the majority of Democrats in Congress voting for Bush's key programs: the tax cuts, war budgets, war powers, and USA PATRIOT Act.

Worried about Bush's global empire building? Empire building is a bipartisan geopolitical strategy of using military basing and control of oil in the Middle East and Central Eurasia to keep Western Europe, Russia, China, and Japan from challenging U.S. hegemony. This geopolitical strategy is as prevalent in the pronouncements of Democratic national security advisers like Zbigniew Brzezinski as in those of their Republican counterparts like Henry Kissinger. The Bush administration's particular intellectual framework for empire coming out of the Project for a New American Century is authored by Democrats as well as Republicans, such as Clinton's CIA director, James Woolsey, and Paul Wolfowitz, the former aide to the late senator Scoop Jackson (D-WA). The Clinton administration's imperialist motives for supporting Star Wars were stated quite openly in the Air Force's "Vision for 2020": "dominating the space dimension of military operations to protect U.S. interests and investment."

Indeed, the Democrats' unadulterated support for empire goes back before Carter, before Kennedy and Johnson's Vietnam War, to another Democratic administration, that of Truman, with Dean Acheson's Cold War strategy of building alliances of U.S.

satellites to contain the Soviet bloc and make the "free" world safe for corporate exploitation. With the demise of the USSR's own empire, the U.S. geopolitical strategy switched "from containment to enlargement," as Clinton's first national security adviser, Anthony Lake, declared in a 1993 speech of that title, adding in words that sound like Wolfowitz's that U.S.-led alliances would accomplish this by "diplomacy where we can; force where we must."

Worried about Bush's militarism? Remember that the post-Vietnam hikes in military spending were initiated by Carter, taking them above the levels Ford had projected, and that the post-Cold War military spending hikes were initiated by Clinton, taking them well above Bush Sr.'s projections. Bush Jr.'s further hikes have been supported by the majority of congressional Democrats. The current mantra among the Democratic Party political consultants and pollsters is that the Democratic presidential candidate must be as "strong on national security" as Bush to be competitive in the 2004 election.

The Clinton foreign policy team was frustrated by the military's cautious Powell Doctrine. As Clinton's secretary of state and then UN ambassador, Madeline Albright, angrily told Colin Powell, now Bush's secretary of state and then chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, "What's the point of having this superb military that you've always been talking about if we can't use it?"

What about Bush's unilateralism? Wouldn't Democratic imperialism be a little softer, more "globalist"? Not hardly. It was Clinton's secretary of state and Brzezinski protege, Madeleine Albright, who told the UN Security Council in 1994 regarding Iraq: "We will act multilaterally when we can, unilaterally when we must." And thus under Clinton the U.S. bypassed the Security Council to impose regime change by military force on Iraqi Kurdistan, Kosovo, and Serbia.

How about Bush's domestic repression? The Clinton/Reno anticrime and antiterrorism bills instituted more than fifty new death penalties, emaciated habeus corpus, militarized domestic policing, gutted Posse Comitatus, legalized FBI and CIA domestic political spying, expanded the drug war, and subsidized expansion of the prison-industrial complex. The Clintonites sent in Delta Force to make sure the heads of anti-WTO demonstrators were cracked in Seattle. The post-September 11 detention of thousands without trial, any kind of hearing, or access to lawyers was done under the statutory authority of Clinton's Anti-Terrorism and Effective Death Penalty Act of 1996. The USA PATRIOT Act just expanded this repressive authority further, again with the votes of the majority of congressional Democrats.

Well, maybe the Democrats aren't as extreme as Bush on domestic economic policy? Here again there is a basic bipartisan consensus. Carter initiated the neoliberal turn as the bipartisan consensus switched from military Keynesianism to military neoliberalism. Though neoliberalism is cloaked in the egalitarian-sounding rhetoric of free markets, the reality is state enforcement of greater inequality: welfare for the corporate rich (investment incentives in theory) and hardship for workers (to motivate higher productivity in theory).

Today's corporate scandals are a legacy of Clinton's financial deregulation, media

monopolization a legacy of his deregulatory Telecommunications Act, the loss of two million jobs a legacy of NAFTA and the other trade deals Clinton made that are sending U.S. manufacturing and backroom service jobs to cheap labor markets overseas. Bush's biggest contribution to the neoliberal agenda has been his tax cuts for the rich, which the Democrats enabled by declaring it a "victory" to pare down their size somewhat.

This bipartisan consensus is forged by the corporate ruling class through its media ownership and financing of publications, broadcasts, think tanks, and its two political parties, Democratic and Republican. To be sure, there are tactical differences within this consensus. No doubt the ruling class is split about Bush. Many of them are worried about the economic irrationality of the latest tax cuts, the destabilizing consequences throughout the Middle East and Europe of the military occupation of Afghanistan and Iraq, and Bush's pandering to the domestically destabilizing social agenda of the Christian fundamentalists. And this faction of the corporate rich will support a Democratic version of the bipartisan consensus, the Slick Soft-Right of a Clinton rather than the Crude Hard-Right of a Bush Jr.

But that is their fight, not ours!

Our fight is to get our alternatives into public debate in the 2004 election: cooperative security instead of the U.S. as global occupation force; renewable energy instead of oil imperialism; economic security through national health care, guaranteed income above poverty, jobs for all at living wages, fair trade and progressive taxes instead of the neoliberal regime of motivating the poor with hardships to work harder and the rich with corporate welfare to invest; economic production in an ecologically sustainable balance with nature instead of endless growth through environmental marauding by the military-industrial complex; repealing repressive laws to restore civil liberties and dismantle the prison-industrial complex instead of Patriot Acts and drug wars; a multiparty system founded on proportional representation and public funding of public elections instead of a state-sanctioned, corporate-financed two-party system with two right wings.

Our fight is to get as many votes as we can for the Green Party candidates for the presidency, House, and Senate. The more votes we get, the more seriously our alternatives will be taken by the public and the more we will be able to further organize and mobilize around them.

One thing is certain. These alternatives will not be heard without a Green campaign. We will not have the vehicle needed to organize people around real alternatives. If the left tails the lesser-evil Democrat again, which has been the dominant strategy of what passes for a left in the U.S. since most of it collapsed into the New Deal coalition in 1936, the whole debate will shift further to the right again.

Let us clear up some fantasies about Sharpton and Kucinich. The other candidates are clearly pro-war, pro-corporate candidates. But Sharpton and Kucinich sound progressive.

Sharpton, as we in New York know, is playing for patronage. That is what he did with his senatorial and mayoral campaigns. He wants to be the Black political broker for

patronage to the Black political class. We know from his history that he will more likely support a Republican to spite Democrats who snub him than a Green. We should definitely keep the door open to his supporters and even to Sharpton himself, but let us not be naive about what his objectives are in the Democratic presidential primaries.

Kucinich sounds like Nader on his policy proposals. But he is not running for president. He is running to build his national stature and fund base to get ready to run for U.S. Senate from Ohio. He will pull out no later than Super Tuesday next March 2 in order to file in Ohio in time to run for reelection to Congress in 2004.

But Kucinich is not like Nader in that he opposed independent politics and the Green Party.

"I have no interest in a third-party candidacy. None," says Kucinich. "I want to do it the other way -- bring third-party candidates into the [Democratic] Party and get support in the primaries" (Ruth Conniff, "The Peace Candidate," *The Progressive*, April 2003).

Kucinich recently told the *Cleveland Plain Dealer*: "The Democratic Party created third parties by running to the middle. What I'm trying to do is to go back to the big tent so that everyone who felt alienated could come back through my candidacy." (*CounterPunch*, April 2003).

The second quote is particularly important to think about. He does not say take the Democratic Party away from its corporate rulers. Rather he wants to bring the wayward Greens into coalition with the Democratic Party's corporate rulers in a "big tent." The whole point of the Greens as an independent party is our independence from the corporate rulers. We want to build a coalition of all of the popular constituencies that are exploited and oppressed by the corporate rulers. That's a big enough tent to win elections. But it's a different tent than the one Kucinich wants to build.

Inside the Democratic Party, the left enters into coalition as subordinate partners with the very corporate rulers who are violently committed to maintaining the system the left presumably wants to transform.

When the left supports the Democrats, it commits suicide and disappears. The left surrenders its voice in the election to the Democrats, who will then triangulate right to cut into the Republican vote. The left surrenders its very identity as an alternative for a different world by supporting a (hopefully) lesser-evil administration of the status quo.

We cannot rely on the Slick Soft-Right Democrats to fight the Crude Hard-Right Republicans. The Democrats haven't done it during the first two and half years of the Bush administration. There is no good reason to start relying on them now. The best defense against the Hard Right is not defensive support for a Softer Right, but a strong offensive around a real campaign for a progressive alternative.

The minute the Greens fail to mount a serious campaign (whether by openly supporting a Democrat as the lesser evil or doing it backhandedly by staging a "strategic" campaign of not competing in swing states) is the minute the public will stop taking the Greens seriously. What little leverage Kucinich and Sharpton may now

have to push the debate to the left will vanish as the Democrats are then free to take votes to their left for granted.

Cynthia McKinney is the future of progressives in the Democratic Party. She is the poster child for what Democrats do to their progressives. When the Democratic Leadership Council and the AIPAC (American Israeli Public Affairs Commission) targeted her for defeat because she had the temerity to call for justice for Palestinians, the Democratic leadership ran away from her, from Maynard Jackson, Andrew Young, and John Lewis in her home town of Atlanta to Jesse Jackson Sr., Terry McAuliffe, and Bill Clinton nationally. They let a Republican judge who supported right-wing fundamentalist Alan Keyes in the 2000 Republican primaries reregister as a Democrat and beat McKinney with Republican votes in Georgia's open primary system.

The spoiler argument against a Green run for president is garbage. The Democrats spoiled the election by, first of all, offering a phony alternative to the Republicans. And then the Democrats spoiled their own election by not fighting for what they had won in Florida. Contrary to the "Nader elected Bush" refrain of the Anybody-But-Bush Democrats, Nader probably helped Gore beat Bush in the popular vote. Analysts as different as Alexander Cockburn on the left and Al From, chair of the Democratic Leadership Council, on the Democratic right, note that exit polling data show that Gore did better with Nader in the race than he would have without Nader. While From uses this data to preposterously counsel Democrats to ignore their left and run to the right, Cockburn's explanation is obviously more persuasive: Nader's campaign forced Gore to articulate some populist, anti-corporate themes that brought many disillusioned Democrats back into the fold. Without Nader in the race, these Democrats would not have voted, and many of Nader's voters would not have voted either.

A Green campaign in 2004 doesn't have to win the presidency to define the debate, move it to the left, and begin to undermine Bushism, which is to say, the bipartisan policy consensus. Truman made his remarkable comeback to beat Dewey by stealing Wallace's thunder and campaigning on the Progressive Party's economic and social agenda. Perot's 19 percent in 1992 made budget balancers out of both corporate parties and set the course for federal budget policies in the 1990s. To define the debate, the Green campaign just has to be serious about getting every vote it can in every state.

At the least, that kind of campaign makes the Greens a threat to "spoil" the Democratic side of the two-party charade and thus compels attention to our campaign. Much better would be a double-digit vote percentage, which could leverage some reforms during the next administration and lay the foundation for further gains at all levels in future elections.

Nothing would be more dispiriting for progressives than a self-defeating, defensive campaign for a pro-war, pro-corporate Democrat. And nothing would be more inspiring than an all-out Green presidential campaign for what we believe in. That kind of Green campaign could be a rallying point for progressives and social movements and begin to turn the tide against the pro-war, pro-corporate bipartisan consensus.

A Green Party "Safe States" Strategy

By Ted Glick ZNet, July 1, 2003

Within and outside of the Green Party there is much discussion about whether or not the Greens should run a presidential candidate in 2004. Some of the external opposition to it is from some of the same people who were opposed to the Nader/LaDuke campaigns in 1996 and in 2000. But other opposition, or serious questioning, comes both from within the Greens and from progressives who have supported, or who continue to support, Green candidates in the past and present.

It's no mystery as to why this is the case: the militaristic and repressive response of the Bush administration following the September 11, 2001, attacks, the dangerous reality of what can only be described as twenty-first-century corporate warmongers and fascists in positions of power within the White House, Pentagon, Justice Department, and elsewhere within the Bush regime. The September 11 attacks are being used by them to attempt to significantly strengthen and expand an already oppressive and repressive, corporatized political and economic system.

What they have done and what they intend to do are qualitatively and quantitatively beyond anything we have experienced in this country for many decades.

In this context, it has to be admitted that, on the surface, the "anybody but Bush" argument (Lieberman, Graham, Edwards, Daschle, Kerry) has validity.

However, I think it would be a huge mistake for the Green Party not to move forward with its plans to nominate a candidate, for a number of reasons.

The fact is that the Green Party is the leading national "third party" formation. It has earned this through its work over many years throughout the country. For those of us who understand clearly that the Democratic Party is part of the problem and in no way part of the solution, there is a serious risk that a decision by the national Greens to not run a presidential candidate could jeopardize its prospects for the future.

Although the analogy is not exact, there is a potential parallel with the decision of the Populist Party in 1896 -- a "third party" that was much stronger than the Greens -- to support the Democratic Party candidate, William Jennings Bryan. That decision led to internal divisions and demoralization within Populist Party ranks that led to its virtual disappearance by the turn of the century.

The need for a progressive alternative to the Democrats and Republicans is too great for such a risk to be taken, especially because of the dangerousness of the Bush regime. Think about it: what if the Greens decided to make no effort to field a presidential candidate and then, with no candidate on the ballot in November 2004, Bush still wins? We will have a doubly demoralized progressive movement, demoralized because Bush has won but also demoralized because we will have suffered through months of political campaigning where, almost certainly, the national political debate between the Republicans and the Democrats moves the "political center" even more to

the right. Talk about political torture!

As we saw in 2000, a serious Green Party presidential campaign can bring progressive ideas, energy, and visibility into the political arena that is badly needed. Remember all those super-rallies across the country in the fall of 2000? What if it comes down to a Bush-Lieberman race, or Bush-Edwards, Bush-Daschle, or Bush-Kerry?

All of those Democrats, all seen as the leading contenders at this point in the game, supported the war on Iraq and voted in October, along with candidate Bob Graham, to give Bush authorization to decide on his own about going to war. All of them, to a greater or a lesser degree, have gone along with the Bush regime's quest for empire conducted under the guise of a "war on terrorism." None of them can be expected to seriously challenge the dangerous direction of U.S. foreign policy. In certain respects, a couple of them are even more aggressive than Bush.

What about Sharpton or Kucinich, or (in another category) Moseley-Braun? Well, if one of them got the Democratic nomination, it would be a political development that the Green Party would need to seriously consider. Such a development would be the political miracle of U.S. history. And because it is so unlikely, the Democratic Party and the corporate media being what they are, it's really not something the Greens have to worry about at this point in time.

Finally, what about "dark horse" Howard Dean? A Dean candidacy would mean a more progressive approach on the part of the Democrats, but let's not forget the usual dynamic of a liberal primary campaign turning into a centrist general election campaign. Given Dean's need for that corporate and fat-cat money if nominated, it's a certainty that there would still be a big political space to his left, one the Greens could once again fill.

A "Safe States" Strategy

But the filling of this political space by the Greens has to be done in a certain way, in my humble opinion. It's what I call the "safe states" strategy.

Everyone knows that a Green Party presidential candidate will not win in 2004. But a presidential campaign can help to build the party, give it visibility, attract new members, keep or attain ballot status in a number of states. And if it pulled out 5 percent or more of the popular vote it would mean millions of dollars for party-building leading into 2008.

The best way to do all of these things is to explicitly focus the campaign [2] only in those "safe states" where past voting histories and current polling indicates that either Bush or the Democrat is very likely to win. Let's remember that our presidential election is in some respects not a "national" election; it's fifty separate state elections to choose representatives to the electoral college. If it truly was a national election Al Gore would have been elected president in 2000, even with Jeb Bush and Katherine Harris's criminal activity of throwing legal voters off the Florida voting rolls.

By running this kind of campaign in 25-35 or so almost-certain "safe states," [3] the

Greens cannot be accused, at least accused in good faith, of just being spoilers out to deny the Democrats the presidency. Indeed, by running such a campaign, the Greens and their presidential candidate are saying in no uncertain terms that although both the Republicans and Democrats are problematic, the Bushites represent such a particular danger right now that we have modified our campaign accordingly.

This will gain us the respect of some of our allies in the Democratic Party who are pretty much with us on the issues but, in part because of the winner-take-all nature of our electoral system, are unprepared to move outside it right now. It could well mean more votes from these allies for local Green candidates in states where such candidates are running.

It should increase the popular vote for the Greens toward 5 percent as the argument can be made in the "safe states" that voters should not waste their vote by voting for the Democrat or Republican but should instead vote for the candidate they know is closest to their own views.

And it is possible that such a strategy will actually increase the likelihood that the Democrat, whoever he is, defeats Bush and/or that the Democrats win at least one house in Congress. A Green presidential candidacy will motivate possible nonvoters to come out and vote. This will add to the vote totals of some local and congressional Democratic candidates where there is no significant Green opposition. It will put pressure on the Democratic presidential candidate to use more populist-sounding, anti-corporate language, as was the effect of the Nader 2000 candidacy on Al Gore, which then increased his standing in the polls and helped lead to his popular-vote victory.

What about if the Bush campaign is so politically overwhelming that there are very few "safe states"?

I don't think this is likely. There are too many negatives, from the economy to the exploding national debt to growing armed resistance in Afghanistan and Iraq, to expect that the Bushites will be able to win a landslide victory. Things have been close at the national level between the D's and R's for a long time, and that is the likely scenario again.

However, if the race does look so bleak, it is very unlikely that a Green Party decision not to run a presidential campaign would be able to have much of an effect as far as preventing a Bush victory. Indeed, in such a case, an argument could be made that it's even more important to have an independent progressive voice out there because such a situation could result only if the Democrats truly messed up royally, were so internally divided or "off message" that they alienated a large chunk of their base.

The bottom line: it is not sound politics for progressives to say that the Bushites are so bad that we have to support whomever the Democrats nominate. Think Joe Lieberman! Indeed, the major contribution progressives can make to getting Bush out of office may well be the Green Party "safe-states" strategy articulated here.

Is there risk to this strategy? Of course. But there is also risk to another support-the-

Democrats strategy. There is risk that without an effective "left prod," the Democrats will blow it again. There is definitely a risk that we could jeopardize the viability of the shoots and seedlings of a viable progressive party that the Greens represent.

In 2003 and 2004, just like other years, let's use our brains and be the independent, critical thinkers we like to think we are.

Green Party 2004 Presidential Strategy

By David Cobb

Presented at the National Committee meeting in Washington, D.C., July 2003

The Green Party is the electoral arm of a growing worldwide movement for peace, social justice, ecology, and democracy. The fundamental question facing us is one of sovereignty. Who shall rule -- "We the People" by shared public decision-making or unelected and unaccountable corporate executives in private boardrooms?

The seriousness of the question cannot be understated. Unrestrained corporate power is literally destroying the earth and creating an unjust and ultimately unsustainable world with the plunder. Against this somber backdrop the Green Party must consider how we can continue to grow and evolve beyond our current role as the party of opposition to the party of transformation of politics, culture, and economics.

Growing Our Party

I propose that the Green Party run a strategic presidential campaign in 2004 that builds the party at the local, state, and national levels. I commit that all actions of a Cobb Green Party campaign will work toward that end. If I seek the Green Party nomination for president, I make the following pledges:

- I will publicly support the Green Party platform as adopted at the Green Party National Convention.
- I will immediately share all volunteer lists generated during my campaign with the respective local and state Green Party.
- I will share (at no cost) all donor lists generated during my campaign with the Green Party National Committee by January 2, 2005.
- I will coordinate all hires at the national level with the Green Party National Committee, and at the state and local level with the respective state and local Green Party.
- I will hire Green Party activists to work on my campaign at the national, state, and local level.

The Green Party presidential campaign must be run to increase Green Party membership, build and strengthen our internal infrastructure, help local candidates and initiatives, create state and local chapters where they do not yet exist, and hone our skills as citizen organizers so that we continue to thrive and provide voters a true choice.

The Strategy

The Green Party stands at a crucial moment in our history. The unelected Bush regime has deeply divided the American people. It is unacceptable to claim that there is no difference between the Democratic and Republican parties. If we want our party to grow, we must demonstrate to the American people (and especially progressive voters) that we hear their concerns of the danger Bush poses.

I propose the following strategy for the Green Party presidential campaign in 2004:

1. We consistently articulate instant runoff voting (IRV) as the only solution to the question of Greens as "spoilers."
2. The candidate should publicly state that if Dennis Kucinich or Al Sharpton wins the Democratic Party nomination, we will withdraw from the race. We know that the DNC leadership and their corporate funders will never allow a Kucinich or Sharpton nomination. By publicly making this statement we demonstrate our willingness to work across party lines with genuine progressives, and when Kucinich and Sharpton are rebuked by the Democratic Party leadership (as were Jesse Jackson and Jerry Brown), it will continue to illustrate that the Democratic Party is not the progressive party in the U.S.
3. The candidate should publicly state that if Joseph Lieberman wins the Democratic Party nomination our presidential campaign will be run so as to prevent his election. We will not back away from an absolute rejection of such a corporate conservative candidate.
4. The candidate should publicly state that if a marginally "moderate" (but still woefully inadequate) candidate wins the Democratic Party nomination, we will follow a strategic- states plan for our campaign. Most of our resources should be focused on those states where the electoral college votes are not "in play."

The Green Party can run a strong campaign in 2004 that grows our party, garners millions of voters, and culminates with George Bush losing the election. The Green Party has grown larger, stronger, and better organized with every election cycle. With such strength comes a responsibility to exercise it wisely and effectively.

Re: Independent Politics: The Green Party Strategy Debate

by **admin**

Posted: **Mon Aug 10, 2015 9:15 am**

PART 1 OF 2

CHAPTER TWO

Green Tactics and Strategy

"Strategic Voting" Is Strategic Suicide

By Howie Hawkins

Synthesis/Regeneration 32, Fall 2003

When Granny D used her speaking time at the Code Pink antiwar demonstration in Washington, D.C., in early March to tell the Greens "not to divide us" by running a Green presidential candidate, she was herself being divisive. Her demand was divisive within the peace movement, which needs to unite on antiwar demands and not exclude anyone based on their electoral approach. Her political tactic mirrors that of Bush when he says if you are not with the U.S. war on terror, you are with the terrorists. There are always more than two choices in any political question.

Granny D is not alone in making this demand on the Greens. Ronnie Dugger, Michael Moore, Carl Davidson, Daniel Ellsberg, and Noam Chomsky are among the other notable progressives who are telling progressives to support the Democratic nominee in order to beat Bush. Fortunately, few Greens are willing to rely on the Soft-Right Democrats to defend us from the Hard-Right Republicans. Unfortunately, too many Greens are accepting the sneaky version of this demand: strategic voting.

Various proposals have circulated under various names (safe states, strategic voting, tactical voting, three-dimensional, etc.), but they all boil down to the Green ticket either cutting a deal with the Democrats and exiting the campaign late, or not competing for votes with the Democratic candidate in the "battleground" swing states where the polls show the race between the Democratic and Republican tickets to be close and the electoral votes of those states up for grabs. Strategic voting proposals let the Greens run where they won't affect the outcome, but not where they might.

The minute the Greens stop campaigning where they might affect the outcome is the minute no one takes the Greens seriously. The minute the Greens start backhandedly supporting Democrats with a cute "strategic voting" scheme is the minute the public stops taking Greens seriously. This will be because the Greens have stopped taking themselves seriously. It is the minute that the corporate Democrats feel free to completely ignore their own Kucinich/Sharpton wing and take votes to their left for granted. It is the minute the whole dynamic of the election shifts to the right, with the Green Party looking like it isn't really serious about wanting governmental power to make changes.

The best way to fight the right is with a good offense around an independent campaign for a real alternative. The Democratic leadership is so complicit in Bush's tax cuts, corporate pandering, war powers, war budgets, and repressive legislation that it is hard to argue they are the lesser evil. It's more like the slicker evil of a Clinton versus the cruder evil of a Bush Jr.

Where's the Difference?

Neoconservative militarism and neoliberal economics are not Bush's exclusive preserve. The Democratic leadership and majority of congressional Democrats are every bit as committed to them as they are to pleasing their financial sponsors in the corporate oligarchy who want these policies.

Neoliberalism includes cuts in social spending, hikes in regressive taxes, cuts in progressive taxes, privatization, deregulation, corporate-managed trade, union

busting, and corporate welfare. In a nutshell, it means the stick of austerity for workers, on the theory it will make us work harder and raise productivity, and the carrot of welfare for the corporate rich, on the theory they will invest and the benefits of increased jobs and tax revenues will trickle down to the rest of us.

Neoliberal austerity is the post-Keynesian economic policy adopted by the corporate rulers as they ran into the internal limits to profits and growth under the Keynesian welfare/warfare state.

The new ruling-class consensus is the austerity/warfare state of neoliberal economics and neoconservative empire. That ruling-class consensus is the pro-war, pro-corporate bipartisan consensus. To be sure, the ruling class is divided about Bush, with some worried about the economic irrationality of the latest tax cuts, the instability his cowboy style of imperialism is stirring up in the Middle East and Europe, and the domestic instability his pandering to Christian fundamentalists may stir up at home. The worried wing of the ruling class will give strong backing to a Democrat like Dean, Kerry, Gephardt, or Lieberman who will be more sophisticated in administering militaristic neoliberalism. That is their fight, not ours.

A Democrat might beat Bush, but no Democrat is going to beat Bushism, which is to say the corporate oligarchy's bipartisan consensus. If a Democrat wins the presidency in 2004, there will be no change in the basic U.S. geopolitical strategy of military basing and control of oil in the Middle East and Central Asia to keep Western Europe, Russia, China, and Japan from becoming potential rivals to U.S. hegemony. Nor will there be any change in the basic neoliberal policy of motivating workers to work harder by imposing hardship and motivating the rich to invest with corporate welfare incentives.

If the Greens don't run a strong campaign seeking every vote they can get in every state, there will be no electoral opposition to the bipartisan consensus of the U.S. as global occupation force and no electoral alternative to the neoliberal policies of economic stimulus by heightening inequalities.

Keeping Our Eyes on the Prize

Who wins the presidential election matters little because most of the power structure is not up for election. There is no election for corporations' private economic power and ability to effectively veto reforms they don't like by divesting, not for the repressive apparatus of the national security state, not for the regulatory bureaucracy that is captured by the corporations they are supposed to regulate. Whoever wins must govern within that power structure.

What matters is whether there is a movement that is organizing people to solve their own problems. That was Nader's central theme in 2000 and, I hope, the point of the Green Party. That theme is far more radical than the policy positions Nader advocated because to solve their problems people need real democratic power, and that is a threat to the whole system.

The Democrats mobilize people to win elections, not implement platforms. I would

hope that the Greens are about advancing their program. There will be no hearing for that program, and no vehicle for people to organize around it, if the Greens do not run a strong campaign in 2004 against both corporate parties. Without that Green campaign, the election will be about who is stronger on "defense" and who can best restore corporate profitability (read: squeeze workers even harder) to end the economy's stagnation. There will be no opposition to militaristic neoliberalism and the Green Party will have rendered itself irrelevant.

The Green Party's political independence is not only about policy planks in the platform, but even more fundamentally about political class independence from the corporate ruling class. It is about the Green Party as an institution independent of corporate money as opposed to the Democratic Party as an institution dependent on corporate money and, when governing, dependent on corporate investment.

The big corporations have an effective veto on reforms because they can threaten a capital strike. The Democrats will never challenge that corporate blackmail and thus can never carry through a progressive program. Political independence is an issue of the parties' class and institutional bases, not just the characteristics of individual candidates.

Were the Greens to give backhanded support to the Democrats in a strategic-voting scheme, they would be entering into a de facto coalition with the corporate rulers as subordinate partners. The Greens would be dependent on what the Democratic candidates said and did and thus surrender the Greens' political independence, their power and their voice, and their very identity as a political force that believes a different world is possible.

Nothing would be more dispiriting and demoralizing for Greens and progressives generally than a defensive, self-defeating campaign to elect another pro-war, pro-corporate Democrat as the lesser evil to the Republican version. On the other hand, an all-out Green campaign for every vote possible in every state could be the inspiration and rallying point for a movement for the Green alternative.

These Green alternatives will not be heard without an all-out Green campaign. That a Green campaign might "spoil" the Democrats' chances is exactly what compels attention to the Green alternative. Greens should embrace that attention, not try to finesse it away with a strategic voting scheme that erases the reason why the Greens would get attention.

Spoiling the Democrats is not our goal. Our goal is to advance our program. We do not have to win the office to win the debate by defining what the issues are. If we can define the debate, we set the agenda for the future and lay the basis for the democratic structural changes in society needed to replace the corporate oligarchy's bipartisan consensus around neoliberal austerity and neoconservative empire with the Green alternative.

Debating the Election: The Democrats Don't Deserve Our Support

By Sharon Smith
Socialist Worker
September 19, 2003

After the 2000 election, Green Party presidential candidate Ralph Nader was roundly denounced by Democrats as a "spoiler" who helped George Bush defeat Al Gore (ignoring the U.S. Supreme Court's decisive role during the Florida debacle in stealing the election for Bush). As the 2004 election approaches, the vast majority of the left -- including many who campaigned for Nader in 2000 -- has made defeating Bush (by implication, with a Democrat) its number-one priority.

The Green Party itself is considering a "safe states" strategy -- campaigning for a Green candidate only in states where Democrats or Republicans hold an uncontested majority, effectively an endorsement of the Democrats. As left-wing journalist Norman Solomon wrote recently, "The Bush team has neared some elements of fascism," while Z Magazine's Michael Albert argued, "However bad his replacement may turn out, replacing Bush will improve the subsequent mood of the world and its prospects for survival."

These are widely accepted justifications for rallying behind the Democrats as "the lesser of two evils." By this "lesser evil" logic, many progressives now attracted to Howard Dean and Dennis Kucinich because of their opposition to the Iraq war will ultimately end up supporting a mainstream Democrat who seeks to win swing votes from the Republicans. Dean himself -- who boasts, "I was a triangulator before Clinton was a triangulator" -- might well fit the bill.

Out of sheer hatred for Bush, progressives can agree that the war party in power should be brought down. But the Democratic Party is a war party in waiting.

"Lesser evil" support for the Democrats has been repeated by sections of the left every four years since the Great Depression. But far from broadening the scope of left-wing politics, it has stunted the development of a radical social movement in the U.S. For this reason, it is necessary to view the role of "lesser evil" politics historically.

The term "fascist" has also been applied to conservative Republicans Barry Goldwater in 1964, Richard Nixon in the 1970s, as well as Ronald Reagan and George Bush Sr. in the 1980s, to express the urgency of voting Democrat on Election Day. To be sure, this Bush administration, dominated by neoconservatives, models itself on Reagan's.

"I don't want to present myself as some sort of singular figure. I think part of what's different are the times ... I think Ronald Reagan changed the trajectory of America in a way that Richard Nixon did not and in a way that Bill Clinton did not. He put us on a fundamentally different path because the country was ready for it. I think they felt like with all the excesses of the 1960s and 1970s government had grown and grown but there wasn't much sense of accountability in terms of how it was operating. I think people, he just tapped into what people were already feeling, which was we

want clarity, we want optimism, we want a return to that sense of dynamism and entrepreneurship that had been missing ... The truth is that my foreign policy is actually a return to the traditional bipartisan realistic policy of George Bush's father, of John F. Kennedy, of, in some ways, Ronald Reagan."

-- Barack Obama from "Obama, the Postmodern Coup," by Webster Griffin Tarpley

And there are differences between the Democratic and Republican parties on issues such as abortion rights. But the two parties, each funded and controlled by corporate donors, agree on fundamental aims, if not on the strategies to achieve them.

Both are pro-capitalist and pro-imperialist -- dedicated to furthering the interests of the U.S. ruling class at home and expanding U.S. power globally. Bloody wars and political repression are unique neither to this Bush administration, nor to Republicans.

Democrat Harry Truman's first presidential act was to order two atomic bombs dropped on the Japanese cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Lyndon Johnson, the Democratic Party's "peace candidate" in 1964, had by 1965 massively escalated the Vietnam War -- a war that killed 1.3 million Vietnamese and 58,000 U.S. soldiers.

Nor is Bush's USA PATRIOT Act the first time that the party in power has used large-scale repression at home. Democrat Woodrow Wilson signed the Espionage Act of 1917, banning protest against U.S. participation in the First World War, and his administration detained and deported thousands of immigrants. In 1942, Democrat Franklin Delano Roosevelt forcibly "relocated" the entire Japanese-American population on the West Coast into concentration camps for the rest of the Second World War.

The Democratic Party's reputation as a liberal alternative to the Republicans is greatly exaggerated -- mainly by its liberal supporters. One need look no further back than the Clinton administration.

As a candidate in 1992, Clinton promised to "put people first," but instead of advancing liberal principles, Clinton stole the Republican's agenda on key issues. The hallmark of Clinton's presidency was ending "welfare as we know it" in 1996 -- dismantling sixty-one-year-old New Deal legislation obliging the government to provide income support to the poor.

Clinton also helped to pave the way for Bush's USA PATRIOT Act when he signed the 1996 Anti-Terrorism and Effective Death Penalty Act. Also in 1996, Clinton signed the Defense of Marriage Act banning gay marriage, and under his tenure the U.S. prison population nearly doubled in size.

There is no reason to assume, as many do, that a Gore presidency would have avoided war after September 11. Clinton oversaw UN-sponsored sanctions against Iraq that led to the deaths of more than one million Iraqis, and U.S. warplanes dropped bombs on

Iraq almost daily during his time in office. And Clinton signed the Iraq Liberation Act in 1998, calling for the U.S. "to seek to remove the regime headed by Saddam Hussein." Clinton's secretary of state, Madeleine Albright, admits in a recent Foreign Affairs article, "I personally felt [Bush's new Iraq] war was justified on the basis of Saddam's decade-long refusal to comply with UN Security Council resolutions on weapons of mass destruction."

There is another reason why supporting the Democrats as a "lesser evil" is a mistake. For nearly a century, this logic has blocked the possibility for building an alternative to the left of the Democrats. Every four years, leftists must betray their principles simply to keep a Republican out of office.

In 1964, antiwar activists adopted the slogan "Half the way with LBJ," only to see Johnson escalate the Vietnam War. In the 1990s, liberals scurried to provide cover for Clinton's welfare repeal. As former Health and Human Services official Peter Edelman noted, "So many of those who would have shouted from the rooftops if a Republican president had done this were boxed in by their desire to see the president reelected."

Largely because the left and the labor movement have remained tied to the coattails of the Democratic Party since the 1930s, the U.S. remains the only advanced industrial society without a labor or social democratic party funded by unions instead of big business. If the left is to move forward, its collective memory must stretch further back than the last Republican administration -- and it must set its sights much higher than promoting the current crop of Democratic Party contenders.

As social activist Howard Zinn argued in the pages of this newspaper, "[T]he really critical thing isn't who is sitting in the White House but who is sitting in -- in the streets, in the cafeterias, in the halls of government, in the factories. Who is protesting, who is occupying offices and demonstrating -- those are the things that determine what happens."

The course of the struggle, not the outcome of the 2004 elections, will shape the future of the left -- and experience has shown that endorsing the Democratic Party pulls the left into its fold, not the other way around.

Debating the Election: We Have a Responsibility to Work to Defeat Bush

By Norman Solomon

Socialist Worker

September 19, 2003

Activists have plenty of good reasons to challenge the liberal Democratic Party operatives who focus on election strategy while routinely betraying progressive ideals. Unfortunately, the national Green Party now shows appreciable signs of the flip side -- focusing on admirable ideals without plausible strategy.

It's impossible to know whether the vote margin between Bush and his Democratic challenger will be narrow or wide in November 2004. I've never heard a credible

argument that a Nader campaign might help to defeat Bush next year. A Nader campaign might have no significant effect on Bush's chances -- or it could turn out to help Bush win. With so much at stake, do we really want to roll the dice this way?

We're told that another Nader campaign will help to build the Green Party. But Nader's prospects of coming near his nationwide 2000 vote total of 2.8 million are very slim; much more probable is that a 2004 campaign would win far fewer votes -- hardly an indicator of, or contributor to, a growing national party.

Some activists contend that the Greens will maintain leverage over the Democratic Party by conveying a firm intention to run a presidential candidate. I think that's basically an illusion. The prospect of a Green presidential campaign is having very little effect on the Democratic nomination contest, and there's no reason to expect that to change. The Democrats are almost certain to nominate a "moderate" corporate flack.

Howard Dean should be included in that category. Let's take Dean at his word: "I was a triangulator before Clinton was a triangulator. In my soul, I'm a moderate." If Dean becomes the Democratic presidential candidate next year, at that point there would be many good reasons to see him as a practical tool for defeating Bush. But in the meantime, progressive energies and support should go elsewhere.

There has been a disturbing tendency among some Greens to conflate the Democratic and Republican parties. Yes, the agendas of the two major parties overlap. But they also diverge. And in some important respects, any of the Democratic presidential contenders would be clearly better than Bush (with the exception of Joseph Lieberman, whose nomination appears to be quite unlikely). For the left to be "above the fray" would be a big mistake. It should be a matter of great concern -- not indifference or mild interest -- as to whether the Bush gang returns to power for four more years.

I'm not suggesting that progressives mute their voices about issues. The imperative remains to keep speaking out and organizing. As Martin Luther King Jr. said on April 30, 1967: "When machines and computers, profit motives and property rights are considered more important than people, the giant triplets of racism, militarism and economic exploitation are incapable of being conquered." The left should continue to denounce all destructive policies and proposals, whether being promoted by Republicans or Democrats.

At the same time, we should not gloss over the reality that the Bush team has neared some elements of fascism in its day-to-day operations -- and forces inside the Bush administration would be well positioned to move it even farther to the right after 2004. We don't want to find out how fascist a second term of George W. Bush's presidency could become. The current dire circumstances should bring us up short and cause us to reevaluate approaches to '04. The left has a responsibility to contribute toward a broad coalition to defeat Bush next year.

No doubt, too many Democratic Party officials have been arrogant toward Green Party supporters. "Democrats have to face reality and understand that if they move too far to the right, millions of voters will defect or vote for third-party candidates," Tom Hayden pointed out in a recent article on Alternet. "Democrats have to swallow hard and accept

the right of the Green Party and Ralph Nader to exist and compete." At the same time, Hayden added cogently, "Nader and the Greens need a reality check. The notion that the two major parties are somehow identical may be a rationale for building a third party, but it insults the intelligence of millions of Blacks, Latinos, women, gays, environmentalists and trade unionists who can't afford the indulgence of Republican rule."

The presidency of George W. Bush is not a garden-variety Republican administration. By unleashing its policies in this country and elsewhere in the world, the Bush gang has greatly raised the stakes of the next election.

In an August essay, Michael Albert of Z Magazine wrote: "One post-election result we want is Bush retired. However bad his replacement may turn out, replacing Bush will improve the subsequent mood of the world and its prospects of survival. Bush represents not the whole ruling class and political elite, but a pretty small sector of it. That sector, however, is trying to reorder events so that the world is run as a U.S. empire, and so that social programs and relations that have been won over the past century in the U.S. are rolled back as well. What these parallel international and domestic aims have in common is to further enrich and empower the already super-rich and super-powerful."

Looking past the election, Albert is also on target: "We want to have whatever administration is in power after Election Day saddled by a fired-up movement of opposition that is not content with merely slowing Armageddon, but that instead seeks innovative and aggressive social gains. We want a post-election movement to have more awareness, more hope, more infrastructure and better organization by virtue of the approach it takes to the election process."

I'm a green. But these days, in the battle for the presidency, I'm not a Green. Here in the United States, the Green Party is dealing with an electoral structure that's very different from the parliamentary systems that have provided fertile ground for Green parties in Europe. We're up against the winner-take-all U.S. electoral system. Yes, there are efforts to implement "instant runoff voting," but those efforts will not transform the electoral landscape in this decade. And we should focus on this decade precisely because it will lead the way to the next ones.

By now, it's an open secret that Ralph Nader is almost certain to run for president again next year. Nader has been a brilliant and inspirational progressive for several decades. I supported his presidential campaigns in 1996 and 2000. I won't in 2004. The reasons are not about the past, but about the future.

Statement on Green Strategy 2004 and Call for Dialogue and Action

By Eighteen Green Party activists

Circulated online

December 14, 2003

As we move closer to 2004, Greens are debating strategy. Both from within and

outside of the Green Party, there is enormous pressure on us. Greens and non-Greens alike are strongly opposed to the policies of the Bush administration. But Greens do not agree whether defeating George Bush, or at least not assisting in his reelection, should be a factor in our strategy.

The signers of this letter definitely agree that the Green Party needs to develop a strategy for next year's presidential campaign. We have different ideas at this point on what particular strategy is best, though we are in full agreement that any strategy which is likely to assist in the reelection of George Bush should be avoided.

We are not signing this letter in support of the Democratic Party, or of any of its candidates, though some individual signers may be supporting one of those candidates. We are not signing this letter because we regret past Green election efforts.

We are signing this letter for several important reasons.

First, the Bush administration has demonstrated a determined will and ability to manipulate the people of this country following the tragic events of September 11, 2001. They have done this to a degree worse than other political parties could have done. They have seriously undermined the democratic foundations of our country, done immense harm to the ecosystem, and alienated scores of nations, big and small, who were once our friends.

Second, the beliefs and opinions of many people and organizations who share our views and struggles for justice and the environment are important to us. They have pleaded that we take the defeat of Bush into serious consideration. We cannot totally turn our backs on their opinions solely because they have not chosen to be active in the Green Party or join our electoral campaigns.

Third, the corrupted election system in the United States creates a dynamic that harms our interest in the short and long term. It permitted the corporate-party candidate with fewer votes in 2000 to take over the White House. While all Greens hold sacred the right to participate in the democratic process -- what is left of it in the United States -- the signers of this letter believe that we neither can nor should ignore the gross faults in the system which assist the greater evil in elections. The harm that can come both to this country and to the Green Party by ignoring the corrupted system that is used to count votes cannot be ignored.

Lastly, the continued growth and strength of the Green Party depends upon how we address this issue. Contrary to what some claim, we believe that to ignore the vast numbers of progressives, many of whom are independent of any political party, bodes poorly for the future vitality of the Green Party. There are no easy choices for the Green Party in 2004, and the growth of any political party requires that it listen to its natural constituencies, including those who have not yet fully joined.

The use of the term "lesser evil" or "greater evil" in describing major-party candidates is instructive. The great majority of the members of the Democratic Party power structure have repeatedly demonstrated that they are not prepared, willing, or able to offer solutions to most of the problems the United States faces. But that party is,

nonetheless, and in general, the lesser of evils. Looking at the greater of evils which we also face, we do not believe we can ignore this difference. While it is small enough to demand the presence of an alternative political party, it is not small enough to completely ignore. The history of the failures and harmful actions of many Democrats are not so relevant to voters in 2004 -- the choices we face in this election are.

As already noted, we do not all favor a single strategy, and some of us strongly disagree with each other's strategy at this point. The strategies we severally favor range from not running at all, to running in ways that will focus our campaign energies in certain states, to calls to possibly drop out of the race near Election Day if it is very close.

But we all agree that the Green Party should not ignore the damage to the country and to the Green Party that could result by ignoring the reality around us and pretending that there is no difference or that the difference is insignificant. The forthcoming issue of Green Horizon Quarterly features four articles that detail different strategies.

We call for:

1. Candidates seeking the Green Party presidential nomination to describe the strategy they would follow.
2. The Green Party to debate all strategies with respect, and for the national Green Party to take a stance on its preferred strategy. All state parties are encouraged to hold special meetings to discuss and democratically decide, using instant runoff voting, which strategy they prefer, followed by a similar decision process from the national party's Coordinating Committee. We are a grassroots party and must make decisions of our grassroots known and not leave a void for our candidates to fill.
3. All Greens to declare their solidarity with our brothers and sisters in progressive organizations across the country in calling for the defeat of the illegitimate Bush administration, while at the same time demanding that the electoral system be reformed to include instant runoff voting, fair ballot access, and public financing.

Agreed to, in alphabetical order: Medea Benjamin, California; Dee Berry, Missouri; Jenefer Ellingston, Washington, D.C.; Tom Fusco, Maine; Holly Hart, Iowa; Ted Glick, New Jersey; Pat LaMarche, Maine; Rick Lass, New Mexico; Linda Martin, California; Dean Myerson, Washington, D.C.; John Rensenbrink, Maine; Anita Rios, Ohio; Steve Schmidt, Florida; Tom Seigny, Connecticut; Charlene Spretnak, California; Ron Stanchfield, New York; Penny Teal, Connecticut; Rhoda Vanderhart, Kansas.

Run, Ralph, Run, But as a Green

An open letter to Ralph Nader, initiated by Greens for Nader (Mark Dunlea, Howie Hawkins, and Walt Contreras Sheasby) December 10, 2003

We, the undersigned, are writing to urge Ralph Nader and the Green Party to work

together to run a strong, united presidential campaign in 2004.

On Election Day 2004, America needs a progressive alternative to the pro-corporate, pro-military, anti-environment agenda offered by the two major parties. Of the various progressive candidates presently considering running, Ralph Nader is by far the strongest. It is important that the Greens and Nader run together.

A strong Green presidential campaign is needed to energize and mobilize progressive voters in America, to give an electoral voice to those who promote peace, democracy, and social and economic justice. Without such a campaign, the political debate and the Democratic Party will continue to move to the right.

Among the reasons for a Nader Green presidential campaign:

- Nader is the most prominent progressive spokesperson in America, long recognized as the most trusted person in the country.
- The similarities between the two major parties are much greater than the differences.
- The Republicans stole the 2000 presidential election, and the Democrats didn't challenge the theft. The Republicans are planning to do it again.
- The world is threatened by America's drive for corporate globalization and an American military/economic empire. Both major parties embrace this goal.
- Nader and the Greens are both stronger if they work together. It would be a disaster for both and for the progressive movement if the two divide.
- If the Democrats win, as they should based on the polls, corporate interests will still be in power, not progressives. Our issues will only succeed if there is a strong independent progressive movement willing to challenge a Democratic administration, not apologize for their shortcomings.

"Anybody But Bush" Is Not a Progressive Solution

The Democrats and their allies are urging the Greens to be silent, to sit on the sidelines while the Democrats fight the Republicans for control of the patronage that comes with control of the national government. Without a strong progressive electoral alternative, the Democrats have moved relentlessly to the right in a futile effort to win elections by offering similar policies as the Republicans but with a friendlier face.

Some self-declared progressives are running scared, demanding that the Greens not run a candidate, or that the Greens backhandedly support the Democrat by not campaigning in the swing states. To be sure, Bush is scary, particularly since September 11. Invasions launched against Afghanistan and Iraq; pre-emptive wars against "America's enemies"; a policy of an American global empire; a curtailment of civil liberties in America; more tax cuts and corporate welfare for the rich. However, the Democrats in Congress supported these steps.

We cannot rely on the Slick Soft-Right Democrats to fight the Crude Hard-Right Republicans. The Democrats haven't done it during the first three years of the Bush administration. There is no good reason to start relying on them now. The best defense against the Hard Right is not defensive support for a Softer Right, but a strong offensive around a real campaign for a progressive alternative.

The argument that it is the wrong time for a progressive third party has been raised in virtually every election cycle over the last thirty years, that it is more important to defeat Nixon, to defeat Reagan, to defeat Bush I and II than it is to build a party that reflects our principles. Yet no matter how many times they have pleaded with progressive third-party forces to "wait till next time," these voices have never said it is time to run, that it is time to admit that the Democratic Party will not support a progressive agenda.

There are differences between the policies of the Democratic and Republican parties. Just as there are differences between GM and Ford, General Electric and Westinghouse, the American and National League in baseball. But the similarity between the two parties is much greater than the differences. Both parties increasingly are financed by many of the same corporate and special interests and act accordingly after the election, rewarding their supporters. The Democratic track record on issues they cite to attract progressive voters -- the environment, women's rights, labor, the federal bench -- is much worse than their rhetoric at campaign time.

The list of the failures of the Democratic Party at the national, state, and local levels is dismal, and is far too long to be chronicled here. Their recent shortcomings include welfare, criminal justice, universal health care, campaign finance reform, global warming, childhood poverty, the ERA, hunger, homelessness, pesticides, genetic engineering, progressive taxes, corporate welfare, nuclear power, the Middle East, nuclear weapons, the military budget, child care, consumer rights, banking, insurance, the war on drugs, foreign policy, corporate crime, etc.

The Democratic Party seldom if ever takes principled stands. Instead, Democrats make decisions based on how it will help them with voters and reward their campaign contributors. At best, the Democratic Party believes for some strange reason that most voters are more conservative than they are, and pander to "them" by moving to the right, while telling progressives not to worry, it will work out in the end, just vote them into power. It didn't work with Clinton in 1992; why would anyone expect it will work with Dean in 2004?

The major-party candidates will of course offer sound bites and photo opportunities on some of these issues. After all, the first Bush president used polluted Boston Harbor as an effective environmental photo op against Dukakis. Their positions will just lack substance, fail to educate, fail to advance a true progressive agenda both during the election and afterward.

The Democrats will not offer an alternative to the failed economic system that has greatly increased the wealth for a few, while making many poorer, with the middle class barely keeping pace over the last decade. For a long time the Democrats have been a right-of-center party. The likely nominee of the Democratic Party, Howard Dean, fits the mold of Bill Clinton and Al Gore. The few progressive presidential candidates within the Democratic Party pull a few percentage points and are treated as fringe players, largely ignored by the media and the party leadership. Their role is not to make the Democratic Party more progressive but to try to pull progressives into the voting booth for the Democrats. These candidates will have been sent back to the

sideline by springtime.

The Democratic Party Is Not a Peace Party

The drive for war by the Bush administration since September 11 is frightening. If ever we needed the Democrats to act like a true opposition party, it was in the days after September 11. Instead they hopped on the bandwagon to bomb Afghanistan, curtail civil liberties, invade Iraq, lock up immigrants, and increase corporate welfare to "restart the economy."

The bipartisan approach to U.S. military interventions under both Democratic and Republican presidents since 1950 has resulted in the killing of an estimated eight million individuals. It has resulted in a military-industrial complex that has continued to grow in power and tax expenditures, despite the warnings of Republican Dwight Eisenhower when he left the Oval Office. Under both parties the torturers were trained, the CIA plotted, the weapons became more deadly, democratic governments were overthrown, American imperialism expanded.

One can argue that, apart from the atomic bomb, some of the nastiest military operations, especially the overthrow of progressive foreign governments, came during the Republican administrations. Yet the planning and implementation of many of the military adventures stretched over both Republican and Democratic administrations. Some of the biggest misadventures, such as Vietnam, the Bay of Pigs, and the Balkan War, came primarily with the Democrats at the helm. Democrats were in charge of the invasion of the Dominican Republic in 1965; shooting peace demonstrators in Panama in 1966; supporting death squads in El Salvador and Honduras in the late 1970s; supporting the mujahideen in Afghanistan in the late 1970s; killing five hundred thousand Iraqi civilians in the 1990s; bombing Sudan and Afghanistan in 1998. And the Democratic members of Congress have usually overwhelmingly supported the many military adventures of the Republicans when they controlled the White House, including the invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq.

The Democratic Party has long joined with the Republicans and supported the one-sided American position in the ongoing conflict between Israel and Palestine, often isolating the U.S. from every other country in the world in votes in the United Nations. Even after the collapse of the Soviet Union, the Clinton administration refused to seek any cuts in the military budget and continued to support the development of new nuclear weapons.

Ralph Nader and the Greens Need Each Other

There is no more progressive candidate than Ralph Nader to communicate the Green's agenda to both progressives and the larger population. He has a strong track record of over thirty years of activism, with an incredible number of groups and issues he has helped launched. He has a strong staff team that has coordinated and can coordinate a national presidential campaign. He demonstrated his ability four years ago to raise a significant amount of funds and to generate thousands of volunteers. While there are some issues that we wish he would speak out on more, he is still good on those issues and getting better.

The 2004 presidential election will be a challenging one for Greens, Nader, and progressives. Some feel that the best the Greens can hope to do is to survive. We need to run our strongest candidate. Without a doubt that is Nader.

Yes, there needs to be better coordination with the Green Party and the Greens should ask to sit down and negotiate this with them. That also means that the Greens take on larger responsibilities for the national campaign than four years ago.

The Greens are a stronger entity than they were four years ago. They have obtained official ballot status in more states and have run stronger and winning campaigns throughout the country. Electoral successes in places like Maine, California, and elsewhere have generated more national attention. The national Coordinated Campaign Committee (CCC) has made some significant progress in strengthening our national political operations. While the party needs to get stronger, and its internal process can be difficult, the party is an asset that Nader strongly needs.

It would be a major historical mistake for the Greens and Nader to run independently of one another, hurting both in the short and long term. The Green Party is now part of Nader's legacy; anything he does to harm the Greens harms himself. The Greens and Nader need to build unity among progressives; if they can't build unity among themselves, the 2004 presidential election will likely be a disaster for both.

Bush Stole the 2000 Election -- and Is Ready to Do It Again

While Democratic partisans argue that Nader cost Gore the election, this is untrue for a variety of reasons, as most campaign experts know.

One, most progressives know that the election was stolen by Bush. Gore won the nationwide popular vote; he also won the Florida and electoral college vote. The U.S. Supreme Court gave away the election. The Democratic Party and the Gore campaign did little to prevent the theft of the election, starting with their failure to aggressively challenge the illegal disenfranchisement of African-American voters in Florida or even to demand that every vote be counted.

Nor have the Democrats made it a major priority to demand election reform since the election, starting with the failure to adopt fairer electoral systems such as preferential voting, or to address the problems with the electoral college. The proposals that have been adopted through the federal Help America Vote Act (HAVA) have increased the likelihood that the election will be stolen again through manipulation of computerized voting results and disenfranchisement of many new voters through improper enforcement of ID requirements, but the national Democratic Party has been largely silent on these issues.

Second, the Nader and Green electoral efforts in 2000 helped the Democrats more than it hurt them. Polls show that more than a million people voted just because Nader was on the ballot. Many of these voters also cast votes for Democratic candidates for other offices, and helped provide the margin of victory in at least two U.S. Senate races, allowing the Democrats to reclaim control of the U.S. Senate. Without Nader on the

ballot in 2002, the Democrats promptly lost control. In addition, whenever Gore responded to the Nader candidacy by articulating a more progressive, grassroots agenda, his standing in the polls went up. Whenever he tried to sound more like a Republican to attract the center-right votes, his standing went down.

For the record, polls showed that if Nader had not been in the race, of the three million Americans who cast votes for him, 25 percent would have voted for Bush, 38 percent for Gore, and 37 percent would not have voted. The net gain from Nader voters for Gore would have been 13 percent (38 percent minus 25 percent), not 100 percent. However, the Democrats have decided to throw away this 13 percent net gain by failing to embrace preferential or IRV voting.

What Strategy to Follow in the 2004 Presidential Election

There is no agreement yet on the best strategy for the 2004 presidential election -- just as there wasn't agreement on the best strategy for 2000.

In the closing weeks of the campaign, Nader focused on states where the election was close, apparently in the hope that the additional media coverage would generate more national votes. Many Greens would have preferred to concentrate on the states where the election was a runaway, like New York, where voters were "free" to vote for whomever they wanted. The end result was that Nader and the party fell several million votes short of the 5 percent national vote total needed for major-party status.

A similar debate, at least partially if not largely in response to the "spoiler" argument, is taking place in 2004. Various versions of a "safe-states" strategy are being promoted, where the Greens and Nader consciously avoid pulling votes in toss-up states. Others object to such a strategy for ideological and party-building reasons (e.g., maintaining ballot lines). It also seems that it would be difficult to get agreement on what the "safe states" are.

This discussion is important but will likely be difficult to come to agreement on, especially as the election unfolds. The dynamics of the "Anybody But Bush" argument will also change once the Democratic nominee is selected, and his specific policies come into focus. Right now, too many "liberals" are projecting their own positions on the Democratic Party; that mistake will become clearer as we get closer to the election, and the center-right positions of the candidate are more highlighted.

Run, Ralph, run -- as a Green.

Letter to the Steering Committee and the Presidential Exploratory Committee of the Green Party

By Ralph Nader

December 22, 2003

I am writing to withdraw my name from consideration as a potential nominee for the Green Party presidential ticket in 2004.

I write this with regret because of my support for your platform and civic activities, because of our shared political history, and because of the numerous efforts I have made, over the years since 1996, to help grassroots Greens build the party. Since running as your nominee in 2000 through all fifty states -- from the disenfranchised Anacostia in Washington, D.C., to corporate-dominated Alaska, from downtown Hartford to the pilot industrial hemp field of Hawaii (not to mention those states where we had to help build the party from scratch) -- I have met with Greens from around the country and the world, scheduled and completed more than forty-five fund-raisers in some thirty states, assisted in starting the Campus Greens, and supported more than a few state and local Green candidates. I remain a registered Independent. But my efforts to build the Green Party and my public contributions on issues of importance to Greens can be compared favorably with those who wear their Green Party registrations as some badge or bona fides.

More recently, as part of my exploratory effort, I have met or spoken with Greens from all over the country in extensive conversations, heard from even more through sign-on letters, Kucinich supporters, Greens for Dean, state and local Green groups, newspaper and magazine accounts, including the Green Pages and Green Horizon, etc., all of which illustrate how the reaction to George W. Bush has fractured -- more than galvanized -- the Greens as a party. Most individuals have the best intentions, and there are people who have now dedicated years to help building the Greens. However, many of the communications I have received express volumes about the maturity of the Greens as a political party.

Although its growth has been slower than many of us would like, the Green Party at least remains poised to respond to the voters' desire for a third party. The failure of the two major parties both to engage a hundred million nonvoters and to provide existing voters with choices over a broad range of important issues has been a continual reality for Greens. With this in mind, uncertainty expressed by the party's leadership regarding the conditions under which the party may or may not field presidential and vice-presidential candidates in 2004 can only be interpreted as a confused retreat.

Specifically, the Steering Committee has declared in reference to whether "the Green Party will (or won't) run a high- (or low-) profile candidate for President in 2004, and that the candidate will (or won't) drop out in their [sic] run for the presidency before election day, possibly making some kind of accommodation (or not) with the Democrats and their candidate" that:

The truth is, no one person or group of persons, inside or outside of the Green Party, will make those types of critical decisions in the Green Party. The strategy the Green Party pursues will be arrived at through a comprehensive process that is beginning now and will go on in every state Green Party, either through conventions or primaries. The conventions and primaries will in turn select delegates from every state Green Party who will come together at our National Convention in the summer of 2004 to make a final, collective decision as to whether the Green Party will run a presidential candidate, and, if so, who that person will be. *

The occasion for this letter is not simply that there are robust contending views about whether to have a presidential candidate and under which strategies and conditions, but that -- should I decide to run -- it is not feasible within the difficult parameters of state and federal election laws to wait and see what the Green Party will do in June 2004. Indeed, the framework and schedule you have chosen for making a decision seems itself tilted against anyone contemplating a serious run as your nominee. Many grass roots Greens who have views contrary to this procedure are not, nor are they going to be, in control of how this decision is going to be made or unmade. It has already been made.

I cannot, nor could any serious potential candidate, embark on a committed campaign for president as a Green Party nominee when the party will not even be certain whether or how it wishes to run a candidate until June 2004. Nor would it be tolerable (not to mention counterproductive for ballot lines, local candidates, party growth, and vote totals) for the party to impose on its nominee varying geographical limits to campaigning. Nor, under such ambiguous conditions, could a committed candidate run the risk that individual state parties would prevent the national nominee access to their ballot lines for whatever conceived motives, with little penalty for nonacquiescence to the convention decision. The deadlines for obtaining ballot access in many states come due prior to or around your convention's decision. Were I to become a candidate, I would not want to launch a campaign with such an uncertain compass regarding what should be a bedrock, genetic determination to run presidential and vice-presidential candidates all out -- which is what, after all, national political parties -- as opposed to movements -- do.

As you know, I have scrupulously refrained from interfering in any internal Green Party matters. For purposes of encouraging more intensive and resourceful initiatives, I have commented on the need to expand the number of state Green offices through more assiduous fund-raising and on the importance of running more candidates. The Green Party has endless opportunities to field candidates, especially among the 2.5 million elective offices at the state and local levels, many of which offer no opposition to the incumbents by the other major party. Given the absence of decision that has been effectively formalized into an unchanging, misguided national procedure on the presidential front, I submit that 2004 might be the year that the Green Party makes a deeper commitment to building the party through state and local candidacies. I and many Greens concur that this is the party's clearest present strength and will be the source of its important talent in the future. During the 2001, 2002, and 2003 elections, Greens won approximately 25 percent of the local offices they contested.

Accordingly, for the reasons described above, I am withdrawing my name from consideration and wish the party and its local community adherents the best in their future endeavors. I still believe that Americans deserve more political parties and better choices than the rhetoric and offerings of the two major parties. I believe in giving people real power to achieve solutions to the problems we have today and in the long-term potential for a reorganized Green Party. In the event that I should still decide to become a presidential candidate, any collaborative efforts that are possible, especially at the state and local level, would be welcome.

Sincerely,

Ralph Nader

Letter to Ralph Nader Urging Reconsideration of Withdrawal

By the Green Party Steering Committee

December 24, 2003

Dear Mr. Nader,

In response to your letter of December 22, we regret your decision not to place your name on the ballot in the Green Party primaries. We believe that the pairing of your legacy with the Green Party was a powerful combination. We are sorry that you have chosen to discontinue this relationship for the purposes of the 2004 presidential race.

We truly appreciate your past and promised future support of Green candidates for elected office. We are convinced that your presence on the campaign trail was a great aid to many of the over one thousand Greens who have run for public office since your own campaign in 2000. We know that your Green presidential bids in 1996 and 2000 led to the formation of dozens of new state parties and hundreds of new Green locals. Your efforts, combined with those of hundreds of thousands of people across the nation, have produced for the first time in seventy-seven years a national progressive party with proven staying power: the Green Party of the United States.

In this light, we sincerely urge you to reconsider your decision.

We also wish to express our confusion at your suggestion that the Green Party is not preparing to field a presidential ticket in 2004. As you know, our 2003 National Meeting in Washington, D.C., produced "a clear mandate" for the Greens to run a presidential ticket in 2004 (http://www.gp.org/press/pr_07_21_03b.html).

Additionally, as you know, the national party has established four well-staffed and funded committees hard at work on preparations for the 2004 presidential race: these are the Ballot Access Working Group, the Coordinated Campaign Committee, the Annual National Meeting Committee, and the new Presidential Campaign Support Committee, which subsumes our old Presidential Exploratory Committee within it. The letter you refer to, as we have told you, was a fund-raising letter written by a former staff person, not a statement of Steering Committee opinion or party policy; after that letter went out, the Steering Committee reassigned responsibility for writing our fund-raising appeals to one of our number.

Six candidates are currently participating in the Green Party presidential primaries: Peter Camejo (California), David Cobb (California), Paul Glover (New York), Kent Mesplay (California), Carol Miller (New Mexico), and Lorna Salzman (New York). The eventual Green Party nominee will be whichever candidate wins the allegiance of the members of the state party affiliates of the Green Party of the United States and, thus, the votes of their delegates to the 2004 Green Presidential Nominating Convention in Milwaukee, June 23–28. The date and location of the convention were chosen by the

Coordinating Committee of the Green Party of the United States (http://www.gp.org/press/pc06_20_03.html). The Steering Committee does not have the power to select the nominee, to choose the dates or site of the convention, or to decide how the candidate will be chosen. These decisions are made democratically by the elected delegates of our affiliated state parties.

We remain committed to the proposition that America needs not just an opposition candidate, but an opposition party. Your commitment and support of the Green Party for the past seven years has brought us and our country closer to a true democracy. We are grateful for your contributions and look forward to more great work together in the future.

Endorsement, Not Nomination
Letter to the Green Party Steering Committee
By Ralph Nader
March 24, 2004

Dear Friends,

As you may have seen from media appearances and public remarks, our independent campaign is advancing a people's agenda of social and economic justice, protection of the environment, and ending the militarization and corporatization of our country and its policies at home and abroad.

Thus far, the campaign has drawn people from across the political spectrum. We have received calls from many Green Party members who want to work with Nader for President 2004. Some Greens are also urging a draft-Nader movement. Some state parties have asked whether I would accept a ballot line in their state. We have also received support from some Reform and Libertarian Party members, Independents, first-time voters and disaffected members of the two major parties.

What is developing is a true independent coalition of voters who oppose the direction in which our country is being taken. There are people in all parties and no party who want to unite to take a strong stand against the corporatist two-party duopoly that is taking the United States downward and taking apart our domestic economy. These are people who are saying enough is enough! They want a government that is truly of, by, and for the people.

Re: Independent Politics: The Green Party Strategy Debate

by **admin**

Posted: **Mon Aug 10, 2015 9:15 am**

PART 2 OF 2

After my letter in December to the Steering Committee, I have been asked by individuals and representatives of state parties as well as the Steering Committee to respond to a number of inquiries. First, I will not intrude on the party's presidential

selection process. As you know, I am running as an Independent and am not seeking nor accepting the Green Party nomination. If you do not choose a presidential candidate in Milwaukee, I would welcome your endorsement and have said the same to other third parties as well. And if individuals want to work with our campaign as part of the broad independent coalition that is developing, we would be grateful.

Should the national Green Party decide to endorse my candidacy and have its members focus their efforts on state and local races, then state Green Party ballot lines and the participation of Greens in a variety of ways would be mutually helpful. However, having spent years helping to build the Green Party, I do not want to be put in a position of responding to individual state parties and thereby dividing the national party because of state ballot requirements. So the rest is up to your decision. With a big task ahead of us we are challenging an entrenched corporate political system that will not relinquish any of its power without a mobilized opposition. We need to work synergistically. As Frederick Douglas said, "power concedes nothing without a demand."

No matter what the national party decides at its convention, I intend to use the platform of my candidacy to advance many Green values and issues and will also encourage serious state and local Green Party candidates across the country.

Together, in many ways, we can expand the challenge to the corporate governments and their political party proxies.

Sincerely,

Ralph Nader

Greens Should Endorse Nader

By Greens for Nader

April 15, 2004

The 2004 Nader for President campaign is developing as a broad coalition drawing support from across the political spectrum. In a March 24 letter to the Steering Committee of the Green Party of the United States, Ralph Nader wrote that he would welcome Green Party participation in the coalition and endorsement of the campaign: "Should the national Green Party decide to endorse my candidacy and have its members focus their efforts on state and local races, then state Green Party ballot lines and the participation of Greens in a variety of ways would be mutually helpful."

The signers of this statement agree with the above and are advocates of sustaining the effective, long-standing alliance between Ralph Nader and the Green Party. Nader's letter expresses a similar sentiment: "I intend to use the platform of my candidacy to advance many Green values and issues and will also encourage serious state and local Green Party candidates across the country. Together, in many ways, we can expand the challenge to the corporate governments and their political party proxies We need to work synergistically."

Nader's willingness to champion the cause of the Green Party by running as our presidential candidate in 1996 and 2000, at a time when we were just beginning to get organized, enormously helped our growth. The 2000 campaign established the Green Party in many states as the leading alternative party in the minds of voters and the press.

This year the Nader campaign has the potential to unite those who want take a strong stand against the cash-register/big-money politics that are undermining public life in the United States. It would be a lost opportunity if the Greens were to ignore the national coalition forming around his campaign or to be viewed as running against Nader.

He will be the only high-profile candidate advocating

- an end to the U.S. occupation of Iraq and large cuts in the military budget;
- single-payer health insurance;
- a living wage and labor rights reform;
- repeal of NAFTA and GATT/WTO;
- creation of jobs through rebuilding of public infrastructure;
- tax system reform (ecological and progressive taxation);
- open debates and full public financing of elections;
- instant runoff voting and proportional representation;
- replacing nuclear power and foreign fossil fuel dependence with domestic renewable energy sources.

A Green Party candidate would also speak out on these issues, but as Greens approach our Milwaukee convention we find that there is not unity within the party for a candidate who could mount a serious challenge in the presidential arena. It will be the Nader campaign playing that role this year. If the Green Party is not a participant in the campaign coalition, the electorate will find it hard to understand why not. On the other hand, if Greens are its most prominent activists, many of those drawn to alternative politics through the campaign will find an organizational home in the Green Party.

Ralph Nader, uniquely, has the ability to shake the foundations of the two-party system. Having been our standard-bearer in 1996 and 2000, he is identified with the Greens in the public's mind. The appearance of Nader's name on as many state Green Party ballot lines as possible would be mutually beneficial. Therefore, the undersigned advocate that the Greens make a decision in Milwaukee to endorse the Nader campaign. This -- along with focusing on state and local races -- is our best option for unifying and growing the Green Party in 2004.

The following Green Party 2004 national candidates have indicated agreement with the above statement:

Sheila Bilyeu, Washington, D.C.

Peter Camejo, California

Carol Miller, New Mexico

Lorna Salzman, New York

An Open Letter to Ralph Nader

By the Editors of The Nation

February 16, 2004

Dear Ralph,

According to the latest news reports, you've pushed up your self-imposed deadline for announcing your decision about an independent 2004 presidential campaign from the end of January to mid-February. We're glad to hear that, because maybe it means you're still not sure about the best path to follow. For the good of the country, the many causes you've championed, and for your own good name -- don't run for president this year.

Ralph, you've been part of the Nation family for a long time, from the day in 1959 we published one of your first articles, the expose of "The Safe Car You Can't Buy." Since then, you've been a consistent advocate for active citizenship, investigative scholarship, and environmental stewardship. It wasn't hype when we called you Public Citizen Number One.

We know you've never been one to back down from a fight. When people tell you you can't do something, if you think it's the right thing to do, you do it anyway. That stubborn devotion to principle is one of your greatest strengths. It inspired a generation of Nader's Raiders in the 1960s and 1970s, it helped produce notable victories like the creation of the Environmental Protection Agency and the Occupational Safety & Health Administration, and it inspired a new generation of young people who flocked to your "super rallies" in 2000. The issues you raise on your Web site, NaderExplore04.org -- full public financing of elections, new tools to help citizens band together, ending poverty, universal health care, a living wage, a crackdown on corporate crime -- are vital to the long-term health of our country. When those issues are given scant attention by major-party candidates and ignored or trivialized by the sham joint-candidate appearances known as presidential debates, we join in your outrage.

But when devotion to principle collides with electoral politics, hard truths must be faced. Ralph, this is the wrong year for you to run: 2004 is not 2000. George W. Bush has led us into an illegal preemptive war, and his defeat is critical. Moreover, the odds of this becoming a race between Bush and Bush Lite are almost nil. For a variety of reasons -- opposition to the war, Bush's assault on the Constitution, his crony capitalism, frustration with the overcautious and indentured approach of inside-the-Beltway Democrats -- there is a level of passionate volunteerism at the grassroots of the Democratic Party not seen since 1968.

The context for an independent presidential bid is completely altered from 2000, when there was a real base for a protest candidate. The overwhelming mass of voters with

progressive values -- who are essential to all efforts to build a force that can change the direction of the country -- have only one focus this year: to beat Bush. Any candidacy seen as distracting from that goal will be excoriated by the entire spectrum of potentially progressive voters. If you run, you will separate yourself, probably irrevocably, from any ongoing relationship with this energized mass of activists. Look around: Almost no one, including former strong supporters, is calling for you to run, compared with past years when many veteran organizers urged you on.

If you run, your efforts to raise neglected issues will hit a deafening headwind. The media will frame you as The Spoiler. It's also safe to predict that you will get far fewer votes than the 2.8 million you garnered in 2000, and not only because your rejection of the Green Party raises expensive new hurdles to getting your name on state ballots. A recent online survey by the progressive news site AlterNet. org found that only one in nine respondents said they'd vote for you if you run this year, a 60 percent drop-off from the number who said they voted for you in 2000. If you run and get a million votes or fewer, the media will say it means your issues were not important. This can only hurt those causes, not to mention the tangible costs another run may impose on the many public-interest groups tied to you.

You have said your candidacy could actually help Democrats by raising issues against Bush that a Democratic candidate would avoid and by boosting turnout for good candidates for the House and Senate, where the slender bulwarks against Bushism must be reinforced. But these arguments do not compel a candidacy by you. As a public citizen fighting for open debates and rallying voters to support progressive Democrats for Congress, or good Independents or Greens for that matter, you can have a far more productive impact than as a candidate dealing with recriminations about being a spoiler or, worse, an egotist. And the very progressives distressed by the prospect of your candidacy would contribute eagerly to have that voice amplified.

And if you think that this year you can help the anti-Bush cause by running and peeling off disgruntled Republicans, McCainiacs, Perotistas, and the like while not disrupting the Democratic charge, please be honest with yourself. Once upon a time, maybe as late as 1992, when you dallied with a "none of the above" campaign and got 2 percent of the vote in New Hampshire from write-ins in both the Democratic and Republican primaries, your appeal stretched across the political spectrum. No longer, alas. Your nephew, Tarek Milleron, wrote recently that if you run in 2004 it will be "the year of the Elks clubs, the garden clubs, meetings with former Enron employees, the veterans groups, Wal-Mart employees," not progressive super rallies. But how many Elks club presidents are inviting you to speak? How many veterans groups? Such relationships take time to build and can't be conjured out of thin air in the midst of a presidential campaign.

You once told us you play chess at many levels at once. For all we know, you're thinking of running hard and then, if the race is close, throwing your support to the Democrat in the final days. While such a tactic might make for a satisfying conclusion to an otherwise futile quest, we don't think it justifies the risks, antagonism, confusion, and contortions that such a run would entail.

Ralph, please think of the long term. Don't run.

Sincerely,

The Editors

Whither The Nation? An Open Letter

By Ralph Nader

February 19, 2004

As I reread slowly your open letter, which kindly started and closed with your demand "Don't run," memories of past Nation magazine writing, going back to the days of Carey McWilliams and earlier, came to mind. I share them with you.

Long ago The Nation stood steadfastly for more voices and choices inside the electoral arenas, which today are more dominated than ever by the two-party duopoly trending toward one-party districts:

"Don't run."

The Nation's pages embrace large areas of agreement with the undersigned on policy matters and political reforms, especially the abusive power of Big Business over elections, the government, and the economy:

"Don't run."

The Nation has been sharply critical of the Democratic Party's stagnation, the corporatist Democratic Leadership Council and its domination by Big Money. This is the same party that has just ganged up on its insurgents and reasserted its established forces:

"Don't run."

The Nation has urgently reported on a tawdry electoral system -- ridden with fraud and manipulation -- that discourages earnest people from running clean campaigns about authentic necessities of the American people and the rest of the world:

"Don't run."

The Nation first informed me as a young man about the deliberate barriers -- statutory, monetary, media, and others -- to third parties and independent candidates for a chance to compete, bring out more votes, and generate more civic and political energies. This led me to write my first article on these exclusions against smaller candidacies in the late 1950s:

"Don't run."

The Nation has often encouraged the longer-run effect of small candidacies (civil

rights, economic populism, women's suffrage, labor and farmer parties), which have pushed the agendas of the major parties and sown the seeds for future adoption:

"Don't run."

The Nation has dutifully recorded the hapless state of the Democratic Party, which for the past ten years has registered more and more losses at the federal, state, and local levels. The party even managed to "lose" the presidency in 2000, which it actually won, even with all other "what ifs" considered, both before (Katherine Harris's voter purge), during (the deceptive ballots), and afterward (recount blunders by the party):

"Don't run."

The Nation has editorialized about the spineless Democrats who could have stopped the two giant tax cuts for the wealthy, the unconstitutional war resolution, the Patriot(less) Act, and John Ashcroft's nomination (to mention a few surrenders). Yet you have not pointed to any external ways to stiffen the resolve or jolt the passivity of Jefferson's party, which lately has become very good at electing very bad Republicans all by itself:

"Don't run."

The Nation believes this cycle is different and that the Democrats have aroused themselves. This view is not the reality we experience regularly in Washington. Witness the latest collapse of the party's opposition to the subsidy-ridden, wrongheaded energy and Medicare drug-benefit legislation -- two core party issues:

"Don't run."

The Nation's venerable reputation has been anything but conceding the practical politics of servility, which brings us worse servility and weaker democracy every four years:

"Don't run."

The Nation has intensely disliked being held hostage to antiquated electoral rules, from the electoral college to the winner-take-all system that discounts tens of millions of votes. Such a stand would seem to call for candidates on the inside to highlight and help build the public constituency for change over time:

"Don't run."

It doesn't seem that The Nation would disagree with the conclusions of George Scialabba, who wrote last year in the Boston Review, "Two-party dominance allows disproportionate influence to swing voters, single-issue constituencies, and campaign contributors; it promotes negative, contentless campaigns; it rewards grossly inequitable redistricting schemes, and it penalizes those who disagree with both parties but fear to 'waste' their votes (which is why Nader probably lost many more voters to Gore than Gore lost to Nader)":

"Don't run."

The Nation's open letter does not go far enough in predicting where my votes would come from, beyond correctly inferring that there would be few liberal Democratic supporters. The out-of-power party always returns to the fold, while the in-power party sees its edges looking for alternatives. Much more than New Hampshire in 2000, where I received more Republican than Democratic votes, any candidacy would be directed toward Independents, Greens, third-party supporters, true progressives, and conservative and liberal Republicans, who are becoming furious with George W. Bush's policies, such as massive deficits, publicized corporate crimes, subsidies, pornography, civil liberties encroachments, sovereignty-suppressing trade agreements, and outsourcing. And, of course, any candidacy would seek to do what we all must strive for -- getting out more nonvoters, who are now almost the majority of eligible voters:

"Don't run."

The Nation wants badly to defeat the selected president Bush but thinks there is only one pathway to doing so. This approach excludes a second front of voters against the regime, which could raise fresh subjects, motivating language, and the vulnerabilities of corporate scandals and blocked reforms that the Democrats are too cautious, too indentured to their paymasters to launch -- but are free to adopt if they see these succeed:

"Don't run."

The Nation has rarely been a hostage to prevailing dogma and electoral straitjackets. Its pages have articulated many "minorities of one" over its wondrous tenure and has watched many of its viewpoints today become the commonplace of tomorrow.

I have not known The Nation to so walk away from those engaging in a difficult struggle it champions on the merits, in a climate of conventional groupthink -- much less with a precipitous prognosis of a distant outcome governed by a multitude of variables. Discussions and critiques from a distance, after all, are a dime a dozen in an election year. O apotheosis of the exercise of dissent inside and outside the electoral commons since 1865:

"Don't walk."

Ralph Nader

2004 and the Left

By Ted Glick

Published on <http://www.dissidentvoice.org>

March 30, 2004

Two thousand and four is turning out to be an important political year in many ways.

For those on the political left, the independent, non-Green Ralph Nader presidential campaign is bringing to the fore a number of important strategic and tactical issues, among them: an assessment of the danger -- or not -- of a second Bush administration; what our attitude should be toward progressives in the Democratic Party; the political and organizational nature of the kind of "third party" needed; and with whom in the process of party-building we should be willing to make alliances.

Democrats as Greater Evil?

I have been surprised over the past couple of days to read and hear committed leftists arguing that a Kerry administration would be "the greater evil," as one person put it in an e-mail, compared to Bush. Two days ago in New York City, Peter Camejo said, [and I am] quoting directly, "Kerry will be able to do what Bush wants to do better."

I find this point of view puzzling and troubling. I appreciate where it is coming from. I have certainly felt and thought from time to time that, as the saying goes, it is better to have the wolf out in the open (the Republicans) than in sheep's clothing (the Democrats), with the apparent sheep doing the dirty work cloaked by a veneer of progressivism. But an objective comparison of what the Bushites have done compared to what was done by the Republican-lite Clinton administration can only lead to one conclusion: a second Bush-Cheney-Rumsfeld-Ashcroft-Delay-Wolfowitz-etc. administration, emboldened by a successful reelection campaign victory, will be worse, in many cases much worse, on the vast majority of issues.

Indeed, Ralph Nader, the candidate of many of those on the left who say there is virtually no distinction between the two corporate-dominated parties, has said over and over again that his primary reason for running is to "retire Bush," to "open a second front" of the anti-Bush campaign. Although his tactics in doing so are extremely problematic (see below), the fact that he has been so consistent on this point has apparently not influenced many of his supporters on the left who see virtually no difference between the Democrats and the Republicans. It is a strange thing to observe.

Democrats Far from Monolithic

I think we need to open up a national discussion about the nature of the Democratic Party and, indeed, what is happening within it as far as an upsurge among progressive Democrats angry at its leadership's collaboration with Republicans. One example is what happened in October of 2002 when, because of the massive grassroots pressure of the peace movement, 156 members of Congress voted against giving Bush the authority to go to war against Iraq. One was an independent, six were Republicans, and one hundred and forty-nine were Democrats.

Another example is the fact that, of the fifty-five or so members of the Congressional Progressive Caucus (some of whom are solidly progressive, others not so much), not a single one is a Republican.

And of course there is the phenomenon of the Howard Dean movement and the reality that the political tone of the Democratic Party debates in the last half of 2003 and early

2004 were much more progressive than we saw in 1999–2000.

A progressive political party that does not take these realities into account in determining strategy or, worse, that acts and speaks as if these facts are not facts, will be a political party that is marginal and of little effect.

My twenty-nine years of involvement in organizations committed to the building of an alternative to the Democrats and Republicans have convinced me that there are three mutually reinforcing, overall tasks which we must be about if we are to ever get to the point of having a progressive party which can actually challenge for power:

1. We must run candidates on "third-party" lines and build independent organizations engaged in grass roots organizing around the issues affecting working people. We need candidates willing to stand up and be crystal clear about their allegiance to the interests of the people and our seriously endangered ecosystem and not the corporate-dominated parties, able to demonstrate that there is a base of voting support for independent candidacies. As much as possible there should be connections between the electoral and the nonelectoral activity.

2. We must be about the process of changing the electoral rules of the game. We must move from winner-take-all to the use of instant runoff voting and, longer-term, proportional representation. We need public financing of elections. These are the two electoral reforms that can do the most to open up the political system to those who have been historically disenfranchised.

3. At the same time, we must pay careful attention to the struggle within the Democratic Party between its progressive and Democratic Leadership Council wings. We need to maintain our connections with those with whom we share generally similar positions on the issues (as in the Kucinich and Sharpton campaigns). Over time, if we do our first two tasks well, there will be an increasing number of Democrats who become former Democrats as they come over to our side. At some point we can expect a major rupture between the progressive and DLC wings and the possibility of a massive new independent force emerging if we keep building political pressure from the outside, demanding that the Democrats take progressive positions, which in many cases they will either not do or do to a minimal extent.

The United States of America is not Western Europe, Latin America, South Africa, New Zealand, or any of the many countries in the world which use some form of proportional representation. We have an anachronistic, nineteenth-century, winner-take-all electoral system which makes our electoral tasks much, much more difficult. That reality must be taken into account as we work to change it. Ideological or tactical rigidity ensures, absolutely guarantees, that we will never get out of this electoral straitjacket.

Political and Organizational Principles

There are certain principles, however, that must undergird our efforts. Politically, our independent political movement and its organizational expressions must be against racism, sexism, homophobia, and ageism. We must oppose corporate globalization

and imperialism, which widen the gulf between the super-rich tiny minority and the vast world majority. We must oppose militarism and wars of occupation for national or corporate domination. We must support various efforts to democratize our political and economic system, including the strengthening of the right of workers to organize. We must call for a crash program to move immediately from the use of fossil fuels to clean energy sources. We must build our movement and its organizations in a fully democratic way.

One would think that these would not be controversial points among progressives. Most are not. But the sad fact is that, based upon the platform put forward on his Web site (<http://www.votenader.com>), Ralph Nader's campaign is seriously deficient when it comes to issues of racism and sexism.

As of Monday, March 29, over a month after Nader announced his plans to run as an Independent, his "Ralph Nader Stands with the People" Web site section takes no positions on a number of basic issues of importance to communities of color and women. Among them:

Police brutality. Affirmative action. Reparations. Immigration and immigrant rights. Reproductive rights. Violence against women. Racial profiling of African Americans and Latinos. Land loss by Black farmers. Native American treaty rights and issues.

Sprinkled throughout this platform are references to race/culture and gender issues in the context of the overall progressive populist character of the platform. Nader, to his credit, does specifically refer, in the context of his opposition to the Patriot Act, to "Americans of Arab descent and Muslim-Americans feeling the brunt of these dragnet, arbitrary practices." He calls the death penalty "racially and class unfair." He spells out the higher rates of unemployment for African Americans and Latinos. He uses the words "environmental racism" in the context of his environmental plank. He calls for "equal pay for women, childcare." But that's about it.

During Nader's 2000 presidential campaign he was much better on issues of specific concern to people of color and women. One of the major reasons for this was that, during and after his 1996 effort, he was criticized both from within and outside the Greens for his refusal to address any issue other those which were about corporate power, by and large. It appears that, regrettably, Ralph did not internalize those criticisms and that the much better politics of 2000 had more to do with the platform and input of the Green Party on whose line he was running.

Organizationally, the Nader presidential campaign has been set up as a completely top-down operation controlled by one man, rather than emerging as a result of the Green Party's internally democratic political process.

Questionable Alliances

Nader says that the reason he had to go independent and not participate in the Green Party's internal process was because the Green National Convention is happening too late. But the fact is that Nader was consulted before that date was set: he was given three possible dates it could happen, and he chose the latest dates, the ones on which

it is happening, the same last weekend in June as the 2000 Green Party National Convention in Denver, Colorado, where Nader was nominated!

I have come to the conclusion that, most likely, the major reasons for Nader's decision not to run as a Green were political concerns about the Greens' holistically progressive set of positions and organizational concerns that he would have to "share power" with others he would not personally choose for his presidential campaign organization.

Instead, Ralph has brought into his campaign people like Pat Choate, key Pat Buchanan backer in 2000, Russell Verney, key organizational operative for Ross Perot, and members of the completely opportunistic and divisive Fred Newman/Lenora Fulani/New Alliance Party/Committee for a Unified Independent Party group.

Strategically, he has prioritized outreach to alienated Republicans, conservative independents, and the Reform Party constituency as his contribution to getting Bush out of office. Perhaps this helps to explain his serious weaknesses on issues of racism and sexism.

So far the evidence of every poll that I have seen is that Nader is wrong when he says that he will be attracting more Republican than Democratic votes. The latest one, as this is being written, is a Zogby poll from a week ago which shows Kerry ahead of Bush in a two-person race, 48-46, but tied when Nader is included, 46-46-3.

Even if Nader turns out to be right on this question, what is he building for the long haul, other than a personal following? The Green Party and independent progressives should not be aligning themselves within a political-party-like campaign with people and political forces like Choate, Verney, and Newman. Such an alliance, if it happened, would be a classic example of an unstable and seriously problematic tactical alliance that will go nowhere afterward. On issues like electoral reform, fine, but these are not the political forces we should be aligning with as we work toward a strong and principled independent political party. Our focus should be on outreach to and the building of working relationships with activists in communities of color, the women's movement, working-class-based community organizations, groups like the Labor Party, lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgendered people -- in other words, with constituencies which are generally progressive.

No-Name Candidacies

So what do I think we should do in 2004?

I have been publicly writing and saying for a year and a half that the Green Party should run a presidential candidate in 2004. I was open to Nader being such a candidate until I heard him speak in mid-December and began to realize that this was a different person than the one I actively supported in 2000. I did what I could to urge Cynthia McKinney to run, but she ultimately decided not to.

So since the beginning of the year I have been supporting former Green Party national counsel David Cobb (<http://www.votecobb.org>).

I support David because he has put building the Green Party, the consistently progressive Green Party, as his top agenda item if he is chosen as the GP presidential candidate. He has also prioritized running his campaign in a way which contributes to getting Bush out of office. He openly supports what he calls a "strategic states" campaign, a much preferable option to working with ex-Reform Party types, and prioritizing outreach to Republicans and conservative independents.

Some call David a "no-name" candidate. I suppose he is, compared to Nader's name recognition, ability to get national press, and ability to raise money. If those are the primary considerations, then David is not your candidate.

I know something about "no-name" candidacies. I was one in 2002 when I ran as the Green Party of New Jersey's candidate for U.S. Senate against corrupt Bob Torricelli and multimillionaire Doug Forrester. I was virtually unknown by the New Jersey electorate, other than among some progressives. I had lived in New Jersey less than four years when I made the decision to run. And yet, by mid-September, I was at 3 percent in a Zogby poll, and an internal, low-budget poll we did had me at 7-8 percent. We were excited and hopeful about the possibilities for a strong showing in November. My campaign manager thought 5-10 percent was a realistic possibility, and I agreed.

Then Torricelli dropped out in late September and the Democrats brought in relative "white knight" Frank Lautenberg, a popular, former three-term U.S. senator, to replace him. My poll numbers went down to 1 percent, and I ended up with 1.2 percent, 25,000 votes.

But then came 2003, and the defection because of my campaign, as he explained it, of Democratic State Assemblyman Matt Ahearn to the Green Party. Over the course of 2003, as the state coordinator, I worked with Matt and others in the Green Party of New Jersey leadership organizing workshops and providing support to prospective candidates, and we ended up with forty-nine Green Party candidates. Thirty-nine were candidates for State Assembly and Senate, a huge increase over the last state election, and the average percentage of the vote was twice as high as the last comparable election. Many of our municipal candidates got double-digit percentages, some in the mid-thirties.

So my "no-name" candidacy seems to have had a very positive impact in building the Green Party of New Jersey.

It's time for the Green Party to move beyond its Ralph Nader phase. Ralph has done much over the past seven years to help us get to this point, but a positive has turned into a likely negative. There are over two hundred Green Party members elected to local office throughout the country. Nader had little to do with the vast majority of those victories. He has made his decision that he is taking another road in 2004. Let's forge our own, one true to our political principles and commitment to democracy.

Endorse Nader

By Howie Hawkins

Green Horizon Quarterly Summer 2004

The Bush-Kerry presidential race in 2004 is looking more and more like the Nixon-Humphrey race in 1968. The U.S. has launched an aggressive war in a far-away country. Domestic dissent from the war is growing rapidly. And both major party candidates support the war.

But there is one major difference in 2004. The U.S. has an antiwar party -- the Green Party -- with enough of a voter base and the ballot lines to have a real impact on the election.

However, with radical conservatives in the White House, the Green Party is under enormous pressure from the social movements they hope to represent politically and from the liberal intelligentsia and the corporate media to support the Democratic presidential candidate. In response, various proposals have been put forth by Greens for a "safe-," "smart-," or "strategic-" states campaign in which the Greens would not campaign in the so-called "battleground" or "swing" states where they might "spoil" Kerry's chances. Two principal reasons are put forth for a safe-states strategy.

Anybody But Bush

One reason is the Anybody-But-Bush argument: removing Bush from the White House trumps all other progressive objectives in this election. This argument crashes on the fact that John Kerry has supported the principal elements of Bush's agenda, including the overt and covert wars for regime change in Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria, Haiti, and Venezuela; the repressive Patriot Act; the "fast-track" bills of 2001 and 2002 authorizing Bush to expand NAFTA/WTO-type trade agreements without congressional review; and the No Child Left Behind bill creating federal mandates for high-stakes testing in public education.

Moreover, for more than two decades the Democratic Party, including John Kerry, has been busy working hand in hand with the Republicans to dismantle the New Deal/Great Society legacy that was the Democrats' only claim to progressive politics. Both major parties share a bipartisan consensus around neoconservative militarism and neoliberal state management of the capitalist economy. Despite its rhetoric of limited government, neoliberal policies of regressive taxes, social spending cuts, deregulation, privatization, corporate-managed trade, and corporate welfare boil down to state-guaranteed welfare for the rich and state-enforced free-market austerity for working people. And neoliberalism depends on the neoconservatives' militaristic means of enforcing its economic policies. As New York Times columnist Thomas Friedman, a pro-Democratic proponent of neoliberalism, put it in his "Manifesto for a Fast World" (New York Times Magazine, March 28, 1999): "[T]he hidden hand of the market will never work without a hidden fist The hidden fist that keeps the world safe for Silicon Valley's technologies is called the United States Army, Navy, and Marine Corps."

If the Democrats have not resisted Bush and the bipartisan consensus around militaristic neoliberalism during the Bush Jr. administration and for more than two decades before, there is no reason to start counting on the Democrats to resist now.

Anti-Green Backlash

Many safe-states advocates concede that Anybody But Bush is a weak argument. They put forth a second argument for a safe-states campaign: the Greens cannot afford to alienate the social movements in which Anybody-But-Bush sentiment is strong. They argue that the Greens must adopt a safe-states strategy to deflect the liberal backlash against the Greens that blames Nader and the Greens for supposedly enabling Bush to beat Gore in 2000.

The role of the Greens is not to reflect reality, but to change reality. Even if the social movements upon which the Greens hope to base their political fortunes are supporting the Democrats, that doesn't mean the Greens should, too. That is how the populist, socialist, farmer-labor, and progressive parties disappeared -- they followed the union leadership into the Democratic Party. That is how the votes of the progressive social movements since the 1960s stopped making political gains -- their leaders were co-opted into the Democratic Party, which takes their movements' votes for granted.

But in fact reality is more favorable to the Greens than the anti-Green backslashers would have us believe. The backlash is not strong in the grassroots of the social movements. From my experiences in door-to-door canvassing and petitioning and in social-movement meetings, as well as observing national opinion polling about whether Nader is to blame for Bush and whether he should run in 2004, it is clear that the backlash against Nader and the Greens is not deep or wide. With the corporate media repeating their anti-Green, anti-Nader drumbeat ad nauseam, the backlash is coming mainly from the "liberal intelligentsia," as Nader refers to them.

I prefer to call them the "professional liberals. " They are the paid officers and staff of the unions, community organizations, environmental groups, women's groups, civil rights groups, and liberal think tanks. Their social networks and career interests tie them to Democratic administrations. Their professional peers are Democrats. Their grants and jobs in Democratic administrations are at stake. They are naturally going to be the most vocal in the counterattack against the Greens and will be the last progressives to break with the Democratic Party. The Greens should stop worrying about what the professional liberals think and focus on taking their message to the rank and file of the unions, the environmental groups, people-of-color communities, and so on, because the Democrats are taking their votes for granted.

A Green safe-states strategy would only encourage the anti-Green backlash. It will show its proponents that they can intimidate the Greens out of competing in elections where the Green candidate might hurt the Democratic candidate. An all-out Green presidential campaign, on the other hand, would demonstrate the clear choice between the Green platform of peace, justice, democracy, and ecology and the militaristic neoliberalism of both corporate-sponsored parties. An all-out Green campaign could win over many in the rank and file of the social movements from underneath the professional liberals in their formal leadership, and should create a crisis of conscience among those in leadership who still have any real commitment to progressive principles.

Nominate Cobb or Endorse Nader?

The presidential options for the Greens in 2004 have now distilled down to two: nominate David Cobb or endorse Ralph Nader's independent candidacy.

These options revolve around three issues: impact, election strategy, and party-building.

The U.S. presidential election is now a three-way race between Bush, Kerry, and Nader. Nader is in the middle of this race because the polls show that, at the least, he has enough to "spoil" the election for Kerry. That fact alone makes Nader's candidacy a topic of debate in the media and on the street.

There is no evidence that a Green Cobb candidacy will have any impact on the national election, particularly if Cobb does not run all-out in battleground as well as "safe" states. The implicit message will be that the Greens really want Kerry to win. The minute the Greens take that position is the minute the media and the general public will stop paying attention to the Greens in the presidential election. We will be irrelevant to the outcome.

If the Greens want to have an impact on this election, endorsing Nader's independent candidacy is the only option we have.

Could Nader Win?

Furthermore, Nader's impact could be far greater than that of a potential spoiler for Kerry. The 2000 National Election Survey data show that only 9 percent of voters who preferred Nader actually voted for him. Fifty percent of Nader supporters didn't vote at all. Twenty-six percent of Nader supporters voted for Gore as the lesser evil to Bush. And 19 percent of Nader supporters voted for Bush as the lesser evil to Gore.

If all the voters who preferred Nader had voted for him in 2000, he would have won the election, receiving 54 million votes to Bush's 43 million and Gore's 38 million (if we add the Nader supporters who voted for their lesser evil to Nader's total and subtract them from Bush and Gore's totals). (These numbers are derived from Harvard political scientist Barry Burden's 2001 study of the National Election Survey data: "Minor Parties in the 2000 Presidential Election," see <http://psweb.sbs.ohio-state.edu/faculty/hweisberg/conference/burdosu.pdf>.)

In 2004, with antiwar sentiment rising and Nader the only antiwar candidate, Nader could well rise into serious contention. It would be a tragedy if the Greens were on the sidelines in such a race supporting another candidate. But whether or not that scenario unfolds, the role of the Green Party should be mobilizing that latent majority who prefer Nader/Green policies, not running an unknown candidate because we fear spoiling the election for Kerry and the Democrats who oppose almost everything the Greens stand for. A strong vote for Nader will be a victory because it will help set the national political agenda just as Perot's 19 percent showing in 1992 compelled both major parties to rush to balance the federal budget.

David Cobb has run a good, energetic primary campaign, with visits to a majority of the states, a great Web site, and lots of local media coverage. He has listened to Greens and adapted his message accordingly, now emphasizing the party-building role his campaign could play over his original safe-states strategy, which itself has been nuanced to accommodate the needs of each state, for example, agreeing to run hard in the battleground state of Iowa because the Green ballot line there depends on the presidential election result.

Party Building and Unity

But Cobb's party-building argument is weak. Greens can run candidates for local, state, and congressional offices all over the country to recruit new people into the party, get our issues into the media and public debate, and achieve other party-building goals. Indeed, these locally based races will be able to accomplish these objectives better because such candidates may well be a factor in these elections while Cobb will be marginal to the Bush-Kerry-Nader race.

If the Greens endorse Nader and are the most visible force in the Nader campaigns of each state and community, Nader supporters can easily be recruited to the Green Party to continue these politics after the election. The Nader campaign will be a far bigger magnet for new people than a Cobb campaign simply because it will affect the outcome of the national election and receive corresponding massive media attention.

Whatever the Greens decide at their convention in Milwaukee, it is important that all sides maintain organizational unity and cooperation despite differences on the nomination question. The Greens have come too far over the last twenty years to split over one nomination in one election.

Letter to The Nation

By Peter Miguel Camejo
June 17, 2004

The Nation has taken the lead in liberal Democratic Party circles in opposing Ralph Nader's independent candidacy and the Greens' running a presidential slate. It seems that The Nation's candidate is John Kerry and it hopes to help him win by silencing anyone who truly opposes Bush's policies. It urges a vote for Kerry, who voted for the Patriot Act, for "unequivocal support" of the Iraq war, who opposes the World Court, opposes the Kyoto Protocol, and so on.

The editors want to help Kerry win by preventing any candidate from running who is for peace and democracy. So those who disagree with The Nation have no choice, no one to vote for. This reflects tremendous arrogance toward American voters because it is essentially the voters whose rights they would deny. They want to force these voters to vote against what they believe. To justify this policy, the editors hide behind the undemocratic, winner-take-all, no-runoff electoral laws. And these undemocratic electoral policies are fully supported by their candidate and party, Kerry and the Democrats (see <http://www.avocadoeducationproject.org>).

The Nation has joined the chorus of those blaming Nader for Bush's selection. Seven million Democrats voted for Bush in 2000, more than two hundred thousand in Florida alone. We are still looking for one Green who voted for Bush. The Democratic Party's campaign's blaming Nader for Bush is a transparent attempt to teach our citizens who question the two-party system that they must not dare challenge these two corporate parties. "It's either the Democrats or you get a Republican," they are told. "Learn to submit to the rule of money. If you challenge them it only gets worse. Remain silent and accept whatever the Democrats give you!"

The Nation's hostility toward the Green Party is reflected in its coverage, for example, of the gubernatorial recall election in California. For the first time, a party to the left of the Democrats, the Green Party, was included in nationally televised debates. In the eight months of the recall election, The Nation avoided any mention of the Green Party or its candidate, myself. All the major papers across the country and every mainstream TV station reported on all six "major" candidates. But like Stalin's servile editors, The Nation carefully edited out the Green candidate from its cover story ("California Chaos," September 1-8, 2003), which showed pictures of all the major candidates minus the Green.

When historians look back, they will marvel at how presenting candidates who will fight for democracy and peace in the 2004 elections was opposed by so many who claimed to support those goals. Just as today we look back in disgust when, 130 years ago, The Nation, in a different context, opposed rights to African Americans, whom it called "the least civilized race in the world."

It's Not Easy Being Green

The Nation Editors reply to Peter Miguel Camejo
June 17, 2004

Peter Camejo has many strong opinions -- for which we admire him -- a few of which are even correct. Others are not. It is misleading to describe our coverage of the Green Party as scanty or hostile or to say we support the major-party duopoly. A glance at our archives reveals extensive reporting on Greens, including this mention of Camejo, from Marc Cooper ("California's Gray Politics," August 19-26, 2002): "With the two major-party candidates inspiring little excitement or loyalty, the November election ought to be fertile territory for third-party movements like the California Green Party. But while recent statewide polls show a surge of support for third-party contenders, Green gubernatorial candidate Peter Camejo, a Marxist-Leninist turned socially responsible investment banker, has yet to emerge from anonymity; his support is estimated at no more than 4 or 5 percent."

We're sorry Camejo found us insufficiently enthusiastic about his candidacy during the recall fight. We tended to focus on which candidate would capture the governor's office in Sacramento rather than on the fortunes of a minor party. Camejo himself embraced that sensible logic in the campaign, when he said he would "not condemn those voters who feel forced to vote for a Democrat like Cruz Bustamante."

On presidential politics we disagree. We believe the number-one priority this November is to defeat George W. Bush. To that end, we have criticized Ralph Nader's decision to run. We have not, as Camejo charges, editorialized against the Greens' running a presidential slate, especially if the party is wise enough to choose a candidate and strategy that avoid tipping the race to Bush in battleground states. Judging from the delegate count as the Greens convene their National Convention in Wisconsin, it seems that the bulk of Camejo's party may agree.

Do we think winner-take-all systems are the best choice? No, and over the years we have run several articles and editorials supporting instant-runoff voting and other forms of proportional representation. Unfortunately, this November we have to deal with the voting system in place. In the end, the voters will of course make up their own minds, and despite Camejo's overheated imagination, no Nation editors will be standing at voting booths preventing them from choosing whom they wish. Also, The Nation has not in its editorials blamed Nader for 2000.

As for our California-recall cover: Camejo's thunderous invocation of Stalinist airbrushing strikes us as overwrought, but we are sorry he feels slighted by not being included on it. Our satiric movie-poster graphic, which -- along with candidates Larry Flynt, Gary Coleman, and "the Terminator" -- featured the headline "California Chaos: A Political Epic With a Cast of Thousands," may have been in questionable taste, but it was scarcely a thought crime.

The Editors

Notes:

* Green Party of the United States mailing signed by members of the Steering Committee, June 5, 2003. See also, as just two of many additional recent examples, December 16, 2003, GPUS Proposal to Create a Presidential Support Committee, "whether we will have a Presidential candidate is not 100 percent settled"; October 28, 2003, National Press Release, "The decision about whom, how, and whether to run in the 2004 national election will be made democratically by all the accredited state Green parties at the Milwaukee convention."

Re: Independent Politics: The Green Party Strategy Debate

by **admin**

Posted: **Mon Aug 10, 2015 7:59 pm**

PART 1 OF 3

CHAPTER THREE

The Milwaukee Convention

Green Party Unity

By Peter Miguel Camejo

Circulated online
June 14, 2004

As we enter the last two weeks before our National Convention the Green Party is clearly divided. No single position regarding how we should participate in the 2004 presidential elections has a consensus.

The current political climate has forced us to deepen our discussion around issues such as lesser-evil voting and long-term strategies for building the Green Party. We are facing unprecedented, relentless attacks from the Democrats (and some ex-Nader supporters) accusing the Green Party and Nader of having "elected" Bush in 2000.

The fear that the Green Party might be perceived as reelecting Bush in 2004 led a group of eighteen Green activists to sign a statement saying that voting for a Democrat (i.e., the lesser of two evils) in some states is the best strategy for building the Green Party this year. The signers of this statement included well-known Greens such as Medea Benjamin, Dean Myerson, John Rensenbrink, Anita Rios, Steve Schmidt, Ted Glick, and many others. Their presentation is clear and to the point.

In response to their position, other Greens presented an analysis in the Avocado Declaration stating that lesser-evil voting is misguided and will block the development of the Green Party. The Avocado Declaration was also signed by a large number of Greens, including well-known activists such as Mayor Jason West, Donna Warren, Matt Ahearn, Howie Hawkins, Marybeth Wuerthner, Linda Schade, Forrest Hill, Jo Chamberlain, and Steve Welzer.

Some Greens worked in the Democratic Party primary campaigns of Dennis Kucinich and Howard Dean. Some are calling for voting for Kerry, and some favor our party not running or endorsing any candidate.

Greens Are Deeply Divided

We are approaching the National Convention unusually divided. I believe, however, that there is a way for us to reach a substantial consensus and come out of the convention united.

I am calling for the national nominating convention to endorse both Cobb and Nader equally -- and to allow each state to decide whether to put David Cobb, Ralph Nader, or "no candidate" on their ballot line.

Such an agreement will result in four candidates -- two presidential and two vice presidential -- campaigning for peace, the rule of law, abolishing the USA PATRIOT Act, defending our liberties, supporting fair taxes, promoting free elections (IRV and PR), fighting for alternative energy, raising the minimum wage, protecting human rights and those of immigrants, and defending our planet. Instead of Greens walking out of the convention divided and fighting each other behind different candidates, we could adopt a win-win solution, allowing us to close ranks to oppose the two parties of money and defend the Green Party.

This proposal -- parity support for Cobb and Nader -- would allow each state to nominate whichever candidate they feel would be most advantageous to have on their ballot ("Free States"). The national Green Party would agree to do whatever it could to ensure that the relevant state authority recognized that candidate as the standard-bearer of the Green Party in that state.

By uniting behind a dual-endorsement agreement, we will come out of the convention with a strategy that the overwhelming majority of Greens can support. We will move forward to build the party together, accepting that we have differences and that these differences are normal in a democratic organization. The key is how we handle these differences to best protect and build our party.

Show Respect for Each Other

After the 2004 elections we must continue in a unified way to build our party on the local and state levels as we continue our discussions, debates, and forums on the best way to deal with the complexity of our undemocratic electoral system.

I dream of all the Greens who entered the presidential primary standing together at our convention saying "this, too, will pass -- we are united behind the Green Party, and someday we will overcome and have free elections in America!"

In proposing this unity concept, let me say we should all congratulate David Cobb for the exceptional personal effort he has made to fight for the nomination; and also show respect for all the other candidates who entered the race: Lorna Salzman, Kent Mesplay, Paul Glover, Carol Miller, and others whose names are not yet listed on the Green Party of the United States (GPUS) Web site.

But we should also stand behind Ralph Nader, who has been the target of unfounded, relentless, and vicious attacks for having been our nominee in 2000. Nader is above 5 percent in many polls and has been as high as 12 percent among younger voters. His instrumental work in helping to create a new organization to fight for open debates, the Citizens' Debate Commission, has been an important contribution to the future of our party and democracy in America.

It is of historical importance that we assist, rather than block, Nader's chances of entering the presidential debates. After I was allowed to participate in the debates during the California recall election, the Green Party gained new respect among a wide range of voters. Similarly, the door may be opening for Nader to enter the presidential debates this election. Such an event would be unprecedented, exposing millions of Americans to a truly progressive viewpoint.

I call on the pro-Nader delegates to help enable David Cobb to run for president. He will be the first registered Green in the history of the United States to run for president. Let him go forward defending the Ten Key Values and our party. Let us help him, not oppose him or the Greens who have rallied around his campaign.

I also call on the Cobb delegates to respect the Greens who support Nader's independent campaign and help us to move that campaign forward as a voice for peace

and justice and Green values -- as an example of our willingness, in a nonsectarian manner, to join with other forces in the struggle for democracy and open elections.

Let us unite behind an agreement to endorse both Cobb and Nader. Such a conclusion to our convention, although unusual, is by far the best way to build the party, heal the wounds of our division, and unify our members. In the same spirit, we should also accept that some Greens will openly support Kerry. Let all Greens be free to continue our debate on these issues, but let us act in a manner that supports unity, while allowing all voices to be heard -- consistent with our decentralized, grass roots party.

When the Green Party in California became divided over the recall of Governor Gray Davis last year, we reacted in a similar manner. We agreed that all Greens should act according to their conscience, but also agreed we should present our party's views in the recall election. Many Greens across the nation hardly knew how divided we were. Instead of fighting each other, we closed ranks, worked together to build the party, and continued to debate our political differences.

We need to act similarly in regard to the presidential election this year. The mass media and the Democrats are anxiously waiting to see us fighting each other. They want headlines like: "Nader Defeats Cobb" or "Nader Defeated." Instead, let's give them a big surprise: Cobb wins, Nader wins, Greens unite and launch a campaign for democracy, peace, and social justice in their battle to save our planet. There are no losers, only winners, among all of us who support the Ten Key Values!

A Few Thoughts for the Green Party

By Ralph Nader

Presentation at Green Party National Committee Meeting, June 25, 2004

Dear Members of the Green Party,

Since 1996 we have carried the banner for free elections, clean elections, and the Ten Key Values for creating a just nation and world, all over our beloved country. But the corporate supremacists and their two-party monopoly have sent the American people their own message -- exclusivity, rigged elections, bought politicians, no political choices, increased concentration of power and wealth, hostility against workers, consumers, small taxpayers, the environment, community values, and a sane foreign policy. In fact -- the Republican and Democratic parties have left most voters with only one incumbent party through redistricting and carving up the country into one-party domination. This is not even a semblance of democracy.

We have to break up this political plutocracy of the corporate government by combining our efforts to strengthen our opposition rather than subtract from them. There are too many good people in our country who know how to build the good society, who have real solutions -- technical, social, and economic -- to our problems, yet who have no political voice. We strive to be their voice. Our voice and your voice

must find unity this weekend to extend our mutual call for action throughout our land.

In this spirit, I had the privilege of selecting Peter Miguel Camejo as my vice president. He brings so much to our candidacy -- knowledge, experience, commitment, precision, civic courage, and over forty years of struggle for justice. He brings bilingual eloquence that for the first time will enable us to communicate Green values to thirty-nine million Latinos on a ticket already polling at 6-7 percent nationwide, and 12 percent among voters in their teens and twenties. He has run twice on the Green ballot for governor of California, distinguishing himself in the recall debates last year before a worldwide television audience.

As you know, what is already in place for our candidacy is important for local, state, and national Green Party efforts this year. You can make a decision tomorrow that would amplify your resources, visibility, and lasting ballot presence, and impact races at the state and local level, where building the Green Party is so critical. With the Republicans and Democrats supporting the war, the Patriot Act, and endless military and corporate welfare budgets, there is less and less left over for the people, their children, and their future, especially the tens of millions of poor people. And this corporate political duopoly is making American people pay for their own oppression, their own deprivation, their own disrespect. Enough of the politics of fear. It is time to shift the power. It is time for the solution revolution. It is time to choose between fear and fortitude.

On the exercise of free accessible elections at all levels, we are working to bring together third parties and independents.

I find Peter Camejo's Unity Resolution [see preceding chapter] as being in the interests of state Green parties, and as the best way to keep the Green Party together and advance common pursuits of justice. This resolution will make it possible for the Nader/Camejo campaign to support candidates, help preserve your ballot lines, and expand the resources of the Green Party. I have had some experience since 2001 in participating at forty-three fund-raisers and other activities for Greens in thirty-one states and the disenfranchised District of Columbia. I felt that this effort was both my duty and pleasure.

Many of you have urged my attendance. In my letters to Greens a few months ago I indicated that the Greens should make their decision by themselves, absorbing all well-intentioned advice, on the merits. There is no role for any dramatic arrivals from this quarter. If you decide on nominations, you will achieve different results than if you decide on endorsements. Some want you to lie low this election and not receive many national votes in the close states. This is a peculiar way to expand your party and establishes a poor precedent that the Democrats will seek to exploit. In any event, it is your decision as delegates to make a deliberative choice. May your conscience be your guide.

Thank you for reading these words. Best wishes for your convention,

Ralph Nader

P.S. I am on my way to our Oregon convention this Saturday, but will try to call your gathering this evening in the spirit of further solidarity.

The Green Party's Step Backward

By Alan Maass
Socialist Worker
July 2, 2004

The Green Party rejected the independent campaign of Ralph Nader at its convention last weekend. Instead, the Greens nominated a little-known attorney and activist from California, David Cobb, as their presidential candidate.

Cobb won the party's presidential nomination by a narrow majority of the nearly eight hundred delegates voting at the convention, heading off a further vote that could have led to an endorsement of Nader's independent campaign. Nader and his vice presidential running mate, Peter Camejo -- a Green Party veteran who ran twice for governor of California, winning more votes in these elections than any Green candidate in the U.S. other than Nader -- had asked for an endorsement of their independent presidential campaign, rather than the party's nomination.

As close as the outcome was, the contrast between Cobb and Nader/Camejo -- and what these campaigns mean for the future of the Green Party -- was stark.

The most important issue is that Cobb and his supporters represent a so-called "safe states" strategy. The idea is that the Green Party presidential candidate should help defeat George Bush in the November election by not running an all-out campaign in "battleground states" where the Greens could do well enough to tip the balance to Bush -- as Nader is accused of doing in the 2000 election.

An online columnist for a newspaper in nearby Racine, Wisconsin, summed up the implications when he suggested that Kerry supporters should "put on a Cobb button" to show Greens coming to the Milwaukee convention "where you stand." "If you want John Kerry to be president, you should hope David Cobb wins big in Milwaukee," wrote the columnist.

Medea Benjamin, a leader of Global Exchange and the Green Party's U.S. Senate candidate in California in 2000, says explicitly that Greens are justified in supporting a vote for Kerry, even though he is opposed to most everything on the Green Party agenda. "In the swing states, where this election's going to be determined, [Greens should] recognize that we owe it to the global community to get rid of George Bush," Benjamin says. "And if people in those swing states support that strategy of getting rid of George Bush, then voting for Kerry might be the strategic vote for them."

Supporters of Nader and Camejo at the convention rejected this argument. "We're the Green Party," Gloria Mattera, cochair of the New York State Green Party, told a Nader/Camejo rally. "It's not our job to elect a pro-war Democrat into the White

House."

As Jason West, the Green Party mayor of New Paltz, New York, who came to national prominence by defying state law to marry gay and lesbian couples, put it: "I've been asking Democrats all over the country how the world would be a better place under President Kerry than President Bush, and no one's been able to give me a good answer. The problem with the "safe states" strategy is it leaves unchallenged the illusion that John Kerry is a progressive who is going to do something very different from what Bush is doing now."

At a time when even mainstream commentators are recognizing that the differences between the Republican and the Democrat in the 2004 presidential election are tiny compared to the policies they share in common, Cobb's nomination represents a retreat by the Green Party from offering a clear and uncompromised left-wing alternative to two parties of the status quo.

Cobb himself left it to supporters like Benjamin and New Jersey Green Ted Glick to push the "safe states" strategy. In his convention speech on Saturday, for example, Cobb didn't even raise the issue of the Greens' attitude toward Kerry and the Democrats, though it was the decisive political question. Instead, his campaign made Nader the main issue -- criticizing the party's 2000 presidential candidate for seeking only an endorsement and not the Green nomination.

This was a play for support among what Green Party national cochair Ben Manski estimated was "a majority of Greens [who] would prefer to see a Green presidential nominee, but running in all states unflinchingly."

It's understandable that Greens would want to have Nader as their party's candidate, rather than simply endorse his campaign. What was surprising, though, was the number who spoke about Nader with the kind of venom normally associated with the Democratic Party's anti-Nader attack dogs. Complaints about Nader -- that he's aloof and egotistical, that he won't join the Green Party, that he has refused to fund-raise for the Greens -- circulated throughout the convention.

Actually, Nader's 1996 and 2000 presidential campaigns are, by most accounts, primarily responsible for quadrupling the number of organized state Green parties and guaranteed ballot lines in the last eight years. Nader wasn't a Green Party member in either campaign, but he promoted the party at every appearance. And since the 2000 elections, Nader raised more money than any Green at the national, state, and local levels, according to his campaign's estimates.

It's impossible to square the image of Nader as an egoist who hasn't lifted a finger to "build the Green Party" with the man who campaigned in all fifty states as a Green in 2000 and won 2.7 million votes in the best showing for a left-wing presidential candidate in half a century.

But Cobb's vice presidential running mate, Pat LaMarche of Maine, doesn't seem to care. As she told the Milwaukee Journal-Sentinel: "[Nader] walked away and said afterward, 'Oh, by the way, if you want to throw flowers at me, go ahead.'"

The contempt for Nader contained in this comment is typical among a layer of Greens and dates back to the aftermath of the 2000 election, when -- even as Nader was being savaged for "throwing" the election to George Bush -- leading Greens privately and sometimes publicly vented their complaints. Early on, Cobb associated himself with the attacks on Nader and used it to lay the basis for his campaign for the nomination.

Last year, when Nader was making his decision about whether to run for president again, eighteen well-known Greens, among them Ted Glick, issued an open letter calling on Nader not to run. Now, many of these figures are outspokenly critical of Nader for seeking the endorsement of the Green Party, rather than the nomination. In other words, their gripe with Nader isn't his relationship to the Green Party, but the fact that he ran at all.

Ross Mirkarimi, a cofounder of the California state Green Party, says he fears that the rejection of Nader because he isn't a Green Party member "may have been two steps backward." Mirkarimi pointed to European countries where left parties typically come together in alliances and coalitions to run common electoral campaigns. "I was a little bit turned off by this purist, insular attitude from other Greens saying, 'No hand holding with somebody from another party, you have to be a Green,'" he said. "That to me was strategically short-sighted."

Donna Warren, a Green from Los Angeles and leader of the party's Black caucus, is blunt. "What I think took place is that some small-minded Greens failed to see the big picture," said Warren, who won hundreds of thousands of votes as the party's candidate for lieutenant governor of California in 2002. "When they got to the convention and they saw an opportunity for our voice to be heard over a national stage, they decided that they wanted to keep it within their own confines."

The Greens' venting about Nader is especially cruel coming as the Democratic Party has stepped up its attack. As the Green convention was getting under way, the Congressional Black Caucus lured Nader to a meeting where members tried to browbeat him into withdrawing from the race.

Every effort of Nader's to get on the ballot is being challenged with all the resources that the Democrats can bring to bear. In the run-up to a Nader rally in Oregon last weekend -- where the campaign hoped to draw more than one thousand people to meet a requirement for getting ballot access -- the Democrats even brought out Howard Dean to attack Nader.

Meanwhile, the Democrats have openly intervened within the Greens, sponsoring the formation of a "Greens for Kerry" organization. But the Democrats haven't needed to devote their own operatives. Left-wing writers -- including former Nader supporters like columnist Norman Solomon -- have devoted numerous articles to making the case against Nader, and for a vote for Kerry to defeat Bush.

Camejo believes the Democrats' attacks on Nader set the stage for Cobb's challenge within the Green Party. "What's behind all of this is that they have friends who say that

they'll be angry if the Greens support Nader," he says. "It's the pressure from the Democrats. They don't want to defend Nader. They want to hide. That's their policy. We're going to be the exact opposite."

Cobb's campaign to win the Green Party nomination has been years in the making. He was able to take advantage of a delegate structure, based partly on the undemocratic electoral college, which gives disproportionate weight to small states with weak state parties.

Thus, Cobb won about five thousand votes in the California Green Party primary, for less than 12 percent of the total. Fewer people than that voted for him in all of the other state caucuses and primaries combined leading up to the convention. Yet Cobb came to Milwaukee with nearly one-third of delegates already committed to him. Camejo, who won thirty-three thousand votes in the California primary alone, had less than half the number of delegates that Cobb did.

Camejo says that he and Nader have support from a majority of Greens at the grassroots. But this wasn't organized into representation or support at the convention. So the Nader/Camejo forces were fighting an uphill battle from the start.

Camejo proposed a unity resolution that would have produced endorsements for both Nader/Camejo and the Cobb campaign, leaving it up to state parties to decide which campaign would get the Green ballot lines. But Cobb rejected the compromise.

At a meeting of supporters after the convention vote, Camejo said that one battle ahead was to "organize those Greens who agree with us to make sure our voice gets heard."

Ross Mirkarimi says that "what's really at play here for the Green Party's long-term survivability is what happens on the local level. For the Green Party, concentrating hard on local partisan and nonpartisan races is where our bread and butter is." Still, the prominence of Nader's 2000 campaign was an undeniable asset to the Greens in local and state races -- and catapulted the party into the national political debate.

As for what happens next, don't expect to hear much about the Cobb campaign -- whether you're in a "safe" state or not. As one Green put it, "This campaign is a zero. It doesn't matter whether he campaigns in a safe state or a battleground state, because no one's going to pay any attention."

The nomination of Cobb is a step backward, away from an uncompromising challenge to the two-party "duopoly" and away from the prominence that the Greens have achieved, thanks in good part to Nader's 2000 campaign.

For the Nader/Camejo campaign, losing the Green Party endorsement means further difficulties getting on the ballot. Campaign officials say they have the resources to qualify as an independent campaign in most of the twenty-two states and the District of Columbia where the Green Party could have helped with its endorsement. California will present the biggest obstacle in terms of the number of signatures that need to be gathered.

In 2000, the Nader presidential campaign that won 2.7 million votes was much more than a Green Party operation. It drew supporters and volunteers from a much wider milieu -- activists from the global justice movement and other struggles, alongside people new to any political activity who questioned corporate domination of the Washington status quo.

This time -- despite the abuse heaped on him by Democrats and the pull of the "Anybody But Bush" syndrome -- Nader continues to score more than 5 percent support in opinion polls as an antiwar, anti-corporate, pro-worker candidate. "I think that what happened here was a setback," Donna Warren said after the convention vote, "but I don't think that it's going to stop this campaign. It can't stop this campaign."

Green and Growing: An Activist Report Back from the Green Party Convention

By Ted Glick

June 29, 2004

The Green Party of the United States took a huge step forward on Saturday, June 26, in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. And it wasn't because the assembled delegates nominated someone, David Cobb, for president.

It was because of how it was done.

Going into the convention there was deep concern on the part of many Greens around the country about what was going to happen. For a year or longer there has been a sometimes-bitter internal debate about what should be done as far as "the presidential question." The perceived threat of an emboldened, second Bush administration has led some to work for Dennis Kucinich. A small group is now working for Kerry, although it is a very small group. Some have said that they will be voting for Kerry and are urging others to do the same.

The three main positions going into Milwaukee were to neither nominate nor endorse anyone, to nominate former GPUS general counsel David Cobb, or to nominate no one and then endorse Ralph Nader. A variant of the pro-Nader position, one pushed by California Green Party leader Peter Camejo, called for no nomination and then an endorsement of both Cobb and Nader.

A nominated candidate would get the Green Party ballot line in twenty-two states and Washington, D.C. An endorsed candidate would get some measure of political support but not necessarily a state Green ballot line; it would be up to each individual state party to determine what it wanted to do. In some states a lack of a nomination would probably mean no candidate would be on the ballot because of state election law.

The political struggle over these positions was intense, and it went down to the wire.

Convention week was begun on Monday with a huge announcement by Nader that he was choosing Camejo to be his vice presidential candidate. Score one for the pro-

Nader forces.

Two days later Medea Benjamin, like Camejo a California Green Party leader, issued a statement headlined, "Want to Get Rid of Bush and Grow the Greens? Support David Cobb." Touche.

As people gathered in Milwaukee for the official first day of the convention on Wednesday, the battle was joined. A primary "stage" for the ongoing debate was the lobby of the Hyatt Regency hotel, a union hotel where many delegates were staying and where many meetings and caucuses were held. Proponents of Nader/Camejo and Cobb, as well as those supporting other positions, set up their leafleting and lobbying teams and for three days mingled with each other and with other delegates trying to gather the necessary 50 percent plus one needed to win.

Significantly, there were no physical altercations or, as far as I am aware, even any nasty emotional outbursts between those on the respective sides, while there was a great deal of reasoned discussion, as well as robust, vigorous, and competitive debate.

This same process of debate and discussion went on at state caucuses, in the room full of literature tables, in the hallways, and throughout the convention.

A Close Race

Everyone knew that it was close. David Cobb went into the convention with about 33 percent of the delegates pledged to him. Those supporting Nader, as well as candidates Camejo, Lorna Salzman, Carol Miller, and Paul Glover, all of whom personally supported Nader, had about 28 percent of the delegates. Twenty-three percent of the delegates were officially uncommitted, 12 percent were for no nominee, and the remainder were for Kent Mesplay and other candidates.

Thursday evening was set up by the Green Party convention planners as the one time prior to Saturday's decision-making when all the candidates would meet in an open forum. For close to two hours Camejo, Cobb, Mesplay, and Salzman (Miller and Glover were not there) answered a series of questions put to them by the moderator in front of a room completely jammed with many hundreds of delegates, observers, and press.

Camejo and Cobb, as the two main protagonists, were both "on their game." Both came across as articulate and passionate in support of their positions. Toward the end of the forum/debate, things got heated as Camejo accused Cobb of being a supporter of John Kerry and Cobb countered by articulating what he has been calling a "smart growth" strategy which prioritizes building the Green Party while also running a campaign which helps to get Bush out of office.

One piece of hard news emerged at the debate when Cobb announced that his campaign had chosen Pat LaMarche, a 43-year-old single mother of two and radio personality from Maine, to be his vice presidential running mate. In 1998, running as the Maine Green Party's candidate for governor, she received 7 percent of the statewide vote, winning ballot status for the party.

Friday morning began with the Cobb campaign distributing a statement they called "The True Position of the Cobb/LaMarche Campaign on the Iraq War: End the Occupation, Bring the U.S. Troops Home Now." The statement quoted from press releases issued in April and May and posted on the <http://www.votecobb.org> Web site, while also criticizing Camejo for "misrepresent[ing] the position of the Cobb/LaMarche Campaign on the Iraq war" at the Thursday evening debate.

Throughout the day the pro-Nader people distributed a leaflet urging those who supported Nader/Camejo to vote a certain way on Saturday. In the first round, they said, vote as mandated by your state. In the second round, when almost all states released delegates to vote their conscience, vote for no nominee, the Nader forces urged. If a majority on the second round voted no nominee, this would then allow for a vote to endorse Nader/Camejo, or endorse both Cobb/LaMarche and Nader/Camejo, in the third round.

In late afternoon both campaigns put out another piece of literature. The Nader campaign distributed a letter from Ralph Nader in which he explained that he would not be coming to the convention but articulated the rationale for why the convention should endorse him. Nader spoke later that evening via telephone hookup to a pro-Nader rally of, according to reports, about 200 delegates and observers.

The Cobb campaign leaflet highlighted what it called an inconsistency between Ralph Nader's position of trying to influence Kerry/the Democrats and "retire Bush," and Camejo's position, articulated Thursday evening, that "Greens should never, ever vote for a Democrat." The leaflet asked, "What is the Nader/Camejo strategy?"

Day of Decision

As people began arriving at the Midwest Airlines Convention Center Saturday morning the politicking continued. Cobb forces were buoyed by an unexpected endorsement in that morning's major Milwaukee daily newspaper, the Journal Sentinel. The headline read, "David Cobb for the Greens."

The day's historic events began with the adoption of a comprehensive and impressive, updated national Green Party platform that had been worked on for many months with much input prior to Milwaukee from Greens all over the country. Then we got down to the main event.

Matt Gonzalez had been decided upon as the election administrator by the GPUS's National Coordinating Committee. Gonzalez is the chair of the San Francisco Board of Supervisors and nearly won last year in a nationally publicized election for mayor of San Francisco.

In the first round there were no major surprises. David Cobb led with 308 votes, followed by Peter Camejo with 119, Ralph Nader with 117, no nominee with 109, Lorna Salzman with 40, Kent Mesplay with 24, and various other candidates with smaller numbers, including Joann Beeman, a "favorite daughter" and elected drain commissioner from Michigan.

Both sides were nervous as Gonzalez adjourned the session for lunch. Over lunch caucusing continued with appeals to hold firm by Camejo to both the California and New York delegations, two Nader/Camejo strongholds. Cobb campaign leaders felt hopeful but not certain that they could win on the second round. The outcome depended primarily on how the 109 first-round "no nominee" votes were cast on the second round.

Prior to Saturday both the Cobb and Nader campaigns had "worked" the "no nominee" delegates. The Cobb campaign argued that those who held that position -- people who, in general, wanted the Green Party to focus its limited resources on local campaigns this year -- should see a Cobb nomination as their second preference, that a Nader endorsement would be a worse alternative for those who wanted to build up Green Party strength via local campaigns given David Cobb's first priority of using his campaign to build the Green Party.

The convention readjourned about 2:30 p.m. to start the second round of voting. It was reported that there were four options for delegates. One option was David Cobb. Another was no nominee. The third was Kent Mesplay, and the fourth was Joann Beeman. There were no other options because, unlike the first round, the convention rules mandated that only no nominee and candidates who signed a statement affirming that they would accept a GP presidential nomination would be eligible to receive votes after the first round. Cobb, Mesplay, and Beeman were the only candidates who signed that statement.

It was obvious to everyone that the big question was whether or not David Cobb and Pat LaMarche would be able to gain the additional seventy-seven delegates needed to have 50 percent plus one. If they failed to do so, that would give a major boost to the Nader/Camejo side and continue the voting into future rounds.

The first three states, Alabama, Arizona, and Arkansas, reported no movement toward Cobb. But the fourth state, California, was a different story. Cobb gained twenty-two votes as compared to the first round, going from thirteen to thirty-five. The pro-Cobb delegates cheered.

As the reports continued, a clear trend began to emerge. Cobb was holding his own in every state, gaining one, two, or three up until Maine, home state of Pat LaMarche, which thrilled the pro-Cobb delegates by going from seven in the first round to eighteen in the second.

A few rounds later, Minnesota gave Cobb an additional ten delegates as compared to the first round, and as the reports continued the Cobb vote kept gaining ground. By the time it got to Virginia, he was right there with, unofficially, seventy-seven additional votes. When Virginia gave him six more votes that pretty much sealed it. All that was needed was for the same trend to continue, for Cobb to lose no ground in the remaining four states.

When Wisconsin went 33-1 for Cobb, a gain of eight votes, everyone knew it was over. All that remained was for Texas, which had passed when they were called earlier, to announce that thirty-four of their thirty-five votes were for Cobb. Texas is where David

Cobb was born, lived, and did Green Party organizing until a year or so ago.

For many the celebration began, genuine joy over a hard-fought victory. Hugs and kisses and dancing in the aisles erupted until David burst onto the stage and introduced Pat LaMarche for her first speech to the assembled delegates. Following it, David came to the podium and spoke graciously about Ralph Nader and Peter Camejo as he called for a strong campaign by the Green Party, indicating his intention to go to Ohio, Pennsylvania, "and New York, if you want me," to help efforts in those states to get Cobb/LaMarche on the ballot.

For others, the feelings certainly ranged from mixed to deep disappointment. But as the session was adjourned by Matt Gonzalez, many of us left the convention center feeling extremely proud not just about the results but about the political maturity displayed by the convention as a whole in the way we had just dealt with a hugely difficult, months-long, often-painful issue.

Green and Growing

This was an amazing week, an emotional roller-coaster for those of us immersed in it. For large numbers of the delegates, it was a strengthening experience and not just because we successfully navigated the dangerous shoals of decision-making regarding the big presidential question. There were the many dedicated activists we met from all over the country who we know will keep building this important organization at the key, local, grass roots level for months and years to come. There were the local Green elected officials like Matt Gonzalez, Jason West, Joyce Chen, and Brenda Konkel and many others that we met and interacted with, as well as the candidates running for office all over the country. There were the valuable workshops and caucuses on a whole range of issues, the great street party Friday evening, the general spirit of unity and common purpose that pervaded the deliberations. The women's caucus, youth caucus, and Black caucus all took steps forward. International visitors and speakers reminded us that we are part of an international movement worldwide and that we have major responsibilities to the world's struggling peoples and threatened ecosystem.

The numbers show it: there is clear, persistent, quantitative growth on the part of the Green Party of the United States, now with affiliates in forty-four states, with 205 Greens in office and ballot-qualified in twenty-two states and D.C. But just as important, Milwaukee '04 demonstrated that there is also qualitative growth.

As David Cobb said in his inspiring speech Saturday night, the Green Party is chock-full of "ordinary people doing extraordinary things." In this time of great danger but also great possibilities, this is no small thing.